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Yours Sincerely

Edmund Kean

THE LIFE

OF

EDMUND KEAN.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE life of a player is, assuredly, not the most important thing in the world. Nevertheless, it may be made amusing, and even useful in its way, if the vivacity of the writer or the misdeeds of his hero are sufficiently great. In biography, luckily, the aristocratic value goes for nothing. It enlightens neither the author nor his subject. A writer may be as lively in a threadbare suit, as though he were hedged in by ermine. And whether his hero be old or young, rich or poor, a lord or a lacquey, need give him no anxiety whatever. It is enough if he be witty himself, or the cause of amusement to others.

We do not presume to be wits ourselves. We acknowledge that we feel the weight of our undertaking. - There are few tasks, indeed, in literature, more difficult we think, than the biography of a celebrated man. Independently of the acuteness necessary in ordinary cases to detect and explain the niceties of character, some judgment is required to determine the circle of events, amidst which he should be made to move; avoiding, on the one hand, too meagre an outline of personal history, as insufficient to show the extent of his influence; and forbearing, on the other, to diminish his due importance, by an accumulation of facts, to which he bears but a remote relation.

The biographer, moreover, has few of those glittering materials to deal with, which go far to make up the splendour of the historian's work. He has necessarily fewer cha-

racters, and far less variety of circumstance to relieve and set off his labours. There is almost always a sameness in the events which he has to recount; for his hero is either a philosopher or a soldier, a statesman or a poet, or a man remarkable in science or art; seldom combining even two of those characters, excepting in the instances of Xenophon and Cæsar.

If it be said that all this is not so formidable as it appears; that an indifferent subject (like a bad cause at Nisi Prius) gives ampler scope to the ingenuity of the advocate; and that genius delights in accomplishing something for itself,—in raising or creating; we admit that this is in some sort true. And yet, this very necessity of "accomplishing something," is an argument in favour of what we urge. Could we be content indeed, merely to blot down on foolscap, the dull doings of a lord of the bedchamber, or send our readers to sleep

with the achievements of some solemn editor (one of the ferrets of learning), who has abolished in triumph at least a score commas in Shakspeare or Chaucer, or misinterpreted Homer anew,—why, the thing might be a matter of indifference; but we have no such malicious designs against them. Our subject is altogether different; and our desire is to touch lightly, (agreeably if we can,) and impartially, upon the principal events of our hero's life. We have, however, no further ambitious hopes, or even wishes. We desire that the course of our narrative should be remembered (if remembered at all), not for its sudden starts and contrasts or imposing sounds, but for its easy and natural current. We are not about to traverse rocky declivities, or the savage wilderness, but a country that is familiar to us all.

And now, we invite the reader to ramble a little with us on the skirts of the theatrical region, before he enters "for good and all,"

(for good we hope,) upon the little history before him. It may form at once our introduction and apology.

Formerly, the deeds of actors were of some moment. Society was proud of these pleasant mimics. They were no longer (as they had been in rude times) wanderers over the land; no longer "vagabonds," grimacing for their barley bread in barns and alehouses. They had become stationary; they had risen to the rank of artists; they included in their roll, men of good manners, of good education, even of genius. Fashion followed them; the wits and high intellects of the time busied themselves with their merits; and they formed, upon the whole, a body well entitled to distinction and respect. For they unquestionably diffused more pleasure amongst all classes of men, than any other body of people whatsoever: and they materially influenced the progress of civilisation; improv-

the morals, and raising and giving refinement to the public taste.

Since those times, a century full of changes has swept over the play-going world. People have increased; luxuries have increased; books have increased: and now, alas! the theatre is little thought of. It has fallen on "evil days:" or else, it has contained within itself seeds of corruption, which have hurried it into premature decay. The rank and fashion of the country avoid it, as a place unsuited to noble tastes; the critics sneer at it; the people frequent it no longer. What is the cause, or rather what are the causes (for there are, we imagine, more than one), of its adversity, we are not sages enough to determine. But we think that we see, if not the origin of the evil, at least certain collateral reasons, why the benches of Covent Garden and Ancient Drury are now comparatively deserted.

First, there is "The Schoolmaster." *He* is abroad. He has entered even the walls of the theatre, and whisked away, with his "charming *rod*," hundreds of the gapers and gazers who formerly used to assemble there, to sharpen their wits or employ their leisure. These personages now sit quietly at home. They read newspapers, and journals, and magazines, and all the pretty duodecimos which that great mother of learning, "the Press," throws out daily, weekly, and monthly, from her ever-teeming bosom. They pick up, from this course of education, something "useful," as they think. And so they do; and so they would have done had they continued to frequent the neglected theatre. For the theatre is not barren of good. In its strength, (its "palmy days,") it is a grand and terrible instructor; and its influence might be extended beyond any point that it has ever yet attained in this country. I

might inculcate pressing and important truths; it might stimulate men to great actions; it might form,—opening its doors, as it does, night after night, and speaking, "trumpet-tongued," to thousands of people,—a powerful and healthy resisting body, between the extremes of unprincipled faction and tyranny; exhibiting to each the value and beauty of "the golden mean," which comprehends within its liberal limits all that is good and useful to human kind; all between "Crœsus' wealth, and Irus' povertie." The theatre might perhaps do this; but the licenser as yet hangs, like an incubus, upon it. His employment is to cut out words which mean nothing, and sentences innocent of evil. He cannot, indeed, altogether repress the vital energies of the drama; but he may materially retard its progress. For an author never can write well, if he write under the fear of a capricious or narrow-minded judge.

He is like a man with a log about his leg—he never can take a free or natural step: his speed is useless, his strength is of no avail. It is worth consideration, whether or not a licenser may not altogether be dispensed with; leaving to the law, which is surely sufficient for the purpose, the task of repressing such exhibitions as are positively obnoxious to good taste, or even to "good order," and of punishing the person offending.

Nevertheless, the Drama, so long as a shadow of its worth remains, (and it *must* remain, and increase in value, if the public support it), is a school from which something may be learned, by all classes and kinds of men. It is a school, however, whose value and importance depend mainly on those who frequent it: for the theatre and the public act reciprocally on each other. The stage must rise in intellect, to satisfy a public that is intelligent; and the public must ever derive new lights, new

thoughts, new pleasures, from the increasing intelligence of the stage. The Drama itself is generated in the public heart. Although it show itself upon the boards of a theatre, in a painted face and grotesque costume, it is itself essentially natural; being wrought out and compounded of the passions and actions and characters of men. If it consist of anything else, it is perishable and bad. It may be poetry, or music; it may exhibit the imagination, the folly, the wit of the author; but it is "*The Drama*" no longer.

Another cause (not to pursue the question to tediousness) of the decay of the theatres, lies in the late hours devoted to amusement; and a third in the vicious system of producing "Stars" upon the stage. We may possibly say a few words on this last mentioned subject hereafter. At present, let us proceed with our theme.

As we have observed, actors and acting

have gone out of repute. Yet, even in Kean's time, the subject had not wholly lost its interest. For the prosperity and accidents of his life became matters of public concern. Lords thronged his doors, during illness; presents flowed in upon him; newspapers were rich in anecdotes concerning him; the pit was full, to repletion; the boxes brilliant; the galleries wild with pleasure.

"Was not this love, indeed?"

It is true, that our tragedian, in the course of time, declined from his zenith, and sank almost to the common level. But he *had* his day; he *had* his share of applause and sunshine;

("They can't but say he *had* the crown;")

and this is all that man's admiration, however sincere, will ever render; all that man's vanity can ever hope to gain. Why should the actor mourn that the incense

burnt before him fades and is offered up no longer, when nothing, except Truth, is lasting?—when the conquests of heroes become lost and confounded in fables; when the inventor is merged in the invention; and the achievements of the poet are demolished by ignorance, or reduced to the limits of a vulgar song?—

The interest once felt regarding Kean, is still recent enough to serve as an apology to our undertaking, were any necessary. But, as we conceive, no apology is requisite. The actor himself is a fair subject for our pens. And we ourselves, albeit we do not arrogate to ourselves any precedence, have as good a right as others to try our luck with the public.

Our history, as the reader will observe, details little more than the events of our hero's life. Had his influence upon his art been great and lasting, we might have ex-

tended the circle of our inquiries. But no actor, we suspect, produces a permanent effect upon the stage. Some of his glory is caught and spread abroad for a time, by imitators (his satellites), but the light fades gradually away; and then another light succeeds,—to grow bright and expire in its turn. Kean, undoubtedly, gave an impulse to acting. His style was striking, and even original; and yet he did little, if anything, more than *restore* Nature to the stage. He infused new life into his art; but marred, as it is said, its dignity. Garrick did the same thing; and encountered the same accusation. When that great actor died, Mr. Kemble persuaded the stage to obey the old dynasty, until Kean, who was of the opposite faction, arose, and once more divided the opinions of the town. There seems always to have been this alternation

between the schools of Nature and Art, (if we may so term them), in the annals of the English theatre.

Let us look back a little. We are not about to fatigue the reader with a regular history of the stage; but, before we bring our hero upon the London boards, and speak of his success there, it will be desirable to show briefly what its condition was, and what his predecessors had done there formerly. Kean owed, we sincerely believe, as little to the example of others, as any actor who ever appeared before the public. Yet he was by no means the only great actor, that the English stage has possessed. We even doubt whether he was the greatest. There were excellent tragedians before him,

"Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona,"

and accomplished performers, who were con-

temporary with him; and in this, indeed, and in the cultivated state of the art, consisted part of the difficulties, that he had to encounter, when he first rushed upon us from the provinces.

In the year 1814, (when Kean made his debut in London,) acting had grown into an art altogether different from those mean and crude exhibitions, which signalised the birth of the English Drama; when, in the spirit of merry Christmas, "The Clergy and Scholars of Saint Paul's" disguised themselves as saints and martyrs, for the edification of the public, (and their own private emolument); and when those "companies of men called vagrants,"—their rivals,—assuming less virtuous exteriors, went rambling about the country, playing merry and profane pieces, and levying rates (or rather tithes in kind) in every town and village, after the fashion of the Capuchins.

The stage had long boasted, and with reason, that men of considerable intellect had resorted to it, as to a liberal profession; and that, as a consequence, the theatre had attained a rank in the social system, which entitled it to consideration. At what precise time it began its rise it is not necessary to inquire. It is most probable, we think, that good acting began when there first appeared something worthy to be represented. The "Mysteries" and "Moralities" of our forefathers were things so utterly contemptible in all respects, except simply as regards a mere amiable design, that Roscius himself would have been damned without ceremony, had he ventured to expose himself in them. There must, at all times, be a foundation and stimulus for the actor. He must have good sense or emphatic lines to utter; poetry or epigram to recite; the husk or outline of a character to fill,—or he is lost. His own

vivacity and intelligence (though much depends on these) are not "the all and all" here. Accordingly, when the Drama shook off the rubbish of words and dull absurdities which had previously oppressed it, and sprang up in its full strength, about the time of Elizabeth, good actors appeared also. Burbage and Alleyne, Taylor and Mason were without doubt very able men. But the first person who exhibited positive *genius* in acting, seems to have been Betterton. His excellencies have met with a fit critic in the person of Colley Cibber; a man who has rashly been denounced as a blockhead, but who was, in fact, a keen and discriminating observer. It is a singular error of fortune, that this author should be known less by his own deserving writings, than by the wit of his enemy. He was a dramatist of considerable merit, and a good actor; and his "Apology" (which every one ought to

read) combines acute criticism with liveliness of detail, in a greater degree than can be elsewhere found in certainly English biography. Nevertheless, he stands out in our recollection—not as the critic, the actor, the dramatist, or the biographer; but as the hero and effigy of dulness, in the bitter slanders of Pope.

Betterton was, according to various concurring testimonies, in the very first order of actors. We do not agree with Cibber, that he and Shakspeare (!) were "formed for the mutual assistance and illustration of each others genius." We think that the fame of our great deer-stealer would have thriven without such companionship; however it might have fared with the reputation of Betterton. But we can easily believe that the actor was a person of subtle apprehension, and of a fine and vigilant judgment. "He could vary his spirit," says Cibber, "to the

different characters he acted. Those wild impatient starts which he threw into Hotspur, never came from the unruffled temper of his Brutus: when the Betterton Brutus was provoked, in his dispute with Cassius, his spirit flew only to his eye. With the settled dignity of contempt, like an impeding rock, he repelled upon himself the foam of Cassius. —Betterton had a voice of that kind, which gave more spirit to terror than to the softer passions; of more strength than melody."

"He had so full a possession of the esteem and regard of his auditors, that upon his entrance into every scene, he seemed to seize upon the eyes and ears of the giddy and inadvertent. In the just delivery of poetical numbers, particularly where the sentiments are pathetic, it is scarce credible upon how minute an article of sound depends their greatest beauty or inaffection. The voice of a singer is not more strictly tied to time

and tune, than that of an actor in theatrical elocution. The least syllable too long or too slightly dwelt upon in a period, depreciates it to nothing; while every syllable, if rightly touched, shall, like the heightening stroke of light from a master's pencil, give life and spirit to the whole. I never heard a line in tragedy come from Betterton, wherein my judgment, my ear, and my imagination, were not fully satisfied: which since his time I cannot equally say of any actor whatsoever."

It is thus that Cibber, his contemporary, speaks of him; and the eulogy is echoed or confirmed by all other writers, who have examined into the subject of the acted drama.

Of the same age with Betterton, were Kynaston the tyrant, Montfort the lover, and Sandford "the Spagnolet" (or villain) of the stage. Each of these had his peculiar merit. But they were rather accessories

than principals. Betterton was undoubtedly the head and crowning spirit of the time; and from him (if from any *one* person alone) we must derive our knowledge as to what style of acting was then prevalent.

The next actor whose manner gave a tone to the stage, seems to have been Quin. For Booth, notwithstanding Cibber's careful commendation of him, was rather a person forming himself upon a preceding model, (that of Betterton,) than an original performer. Neither he nor Barry (nor Henderson, in a later age,) could be considered as enjoying undisputed pre-eminence in their profession, or as originating the then style or fashion of the stage.

Quin's was the grandiloquent or artificial style. He exhibited the form rather than the soul of tragedy. Parts of dignity and lofty pride became him, such as Coriolanus or Cato; but he did not excel in representing

the ebb and flow of the passions,—the lights, and shadows, and conflicting elements, which go to make up the sum of the human character. He wore the cothurnus rather than the buskin*; and appeared dressed in the fetters rather than the ornaments of the Muse. Nevertheless, he reigned till the year 1741, when a more potent spirit arose, and he was suddenly and for ever displaced by Garrick.

Garrick, from every account, must assuredly have been an extraordinary actor—perhaps the most complete one that ever trod upon the English stage. For he was not distinguished simply by one line of character. He was excellent in almost all that he undertook, and was despicable in none. To gain credit, as he did, in Romeo and Lear, in

* Both the cothurnus and the buskin were worn in tragedy, but the former was made so as to give an artificial height to the performer.

Macbeth, Don Felix, Ranger, Hamlet, and Abel Drugger, shows a talent marvellously apprehensive and plastic. And, be it observed, that the merit of his playing was a thing past dispute. He had not merely a party of admirers, a section of the town; but the suffrages of all people were his; and we must conclude that he deserved them. It is not long ago since some of the play-goers of his time survived, and they all, to a man, pronounced upon him the most unqualified panegyrics. A good (although small) figure, a quick and fiery eye, features wonderfully flexible, and the decided air of a gentleman, were the physical requisites which Garrick brought towards the constitution of a great actor. And his other pretensions were of the same sufficing sort; for he had ambition and a natural wit, some learning, industry, a lively apprehension, and sound discriminating

sense. By the aid of all these qualities, he reigned for many years, sole and absolute lord of the legitimate drama.

At last, Garrick, victorious through life over every competitor, retired in his turn; and then Mr. John Kemble arose, and gave to the stage a model for classic grace, for Roman heroism and stoic pride. With all the dignity of Quin, he surpassed him in characters where more than mere voice or figure was demanded, as in Penruddock and the Stranger, where deep touches of human feeling link the misanthrope to the man; or, as in Macbeth, where the spirit is not degraded, by education or habit or its own weakness, below the human sympathies; but sublimated beyond them, and raised to preternatural grandeur, by intercourse with creatures of a more potent order. In these, Mr. Kemble exhibited the pathos

of the one, and the wild solemn abstraction of the other, in a manner that would have borne comparison with any actor.

It is needless to tell our readers, since it must be fresh in the recollection of most of them, that Mr. Kemble was succeeded, as a leader of tragedy, by the hero of this present book.

When Kean threw himself upon the London stage, to take his chance with the public, he found a luxurious theatre, fastidious judges, and many experienced and accomplished performers. In tragedy, (as well as in comedy,) there were persons of established reputation and sterling merit. He had to contest the palm with these; upon their own ground; before audiences accustomed to their manner; and before critics prepossessed in their favour. It is no trifling proof of talent, to have triumphed over these impediments; to have gained an equal number of partisans

and admirers; and to have struck out, amidst many models, an undeniably original style. Whatever may be the opinion of his merits in other respects, his claims to originality are undoubted. The very defects, which his enemies attribute to him, afford conclusive evidence on this point.

At this time, the form of tragedy was dignified and imposing. The family of Kemble, with Mr. Young, their disciple, occupied the stage. They declaimed in a fine and polished style; and, in truth, they were worthy to represent the heroes, real and fictitious, which Shakspeare and other lesser magicians have conjured up, and filled with more than "their wonted fires," for the benefit of the lovers of the drama. It must be admitted that the chance of bringing together a band of actors equally good and effective, was scarcely within the limits of probability. Nevertheless, it was not requi-

site, nor for the advantage of the stage, that these excellent actors should monopolise it. Competition for the public favour was even desirable; possibly for the preservation of the Kemble school,—certainly for the progress of the public taste. Whether the acting of Mr. Kemble was better than that of Mr. Kean, or worse, is a matter of little importance. There exists no ungracious necessity for instituting a strict comparison between these two eminent men. Had Kean even turned out the worse actor, the stimulus which his appearance must have given to the opposite school of acting, would of itself have been useful. Mr. Kemble's acting was undoubtedly in a noble and effective style of art. But it is not clear that it was in the *best* style. For instance, it differed from that of Garrick. Was it therefore better than Garrick's?—We think that a pause must ensue, before the question can be judiciously

answered in the affirmative. Then, Mr. Kemble (Mrs. Siddons also, the most complete tragic actress of her country, was in the same predicament,) was better in some characters than in others. The inevitable consequence from this is, that he was deficient in some; and in 'some,' therefore, he might be surpassed. He was great in Wolsey, in Coriolanus, in Brutus, in Penruddock, and in Cato: even in Macbeth, he might be said to have been great. But in Othello and Richard the Third, in Shylock and Sir Giles Overreach, and other parts, his acting was of a different quality. All this shows that the tragic drama, although for the most part ably represented, was not in all its parts completely filled. There was in fact, a vacuum,—a defect, which Mr. Kean came forward and attempted to supply.

The history of his exploits, in London and the provinces, will be found in the following

pages. Whether our occasional estimates of his talents be correct or not, we cannot pretend to say; but they are at all events impartial. Our leaning (by reason of personal intercourse and old admiration,) is towards the members of the opposite school; yet we shall not be found to have been swayed by this from doing justice to Kean. If it be said, that we have been hasty or superficial; that we have not determined our hero's exact merits in every part which he undertook to fill; nor his precise rank in the scale of histrionic excellence; the almost insurmountable nature of the task must excuse us. Criticism is a delicate thing, and should be nicely balanced. We enter no claims to be looked upon as critics: we want the necessary courage: we were not born critics, nor heroes*. All that we

* The learned Dean of Saint Patrick's, says, "Every true critic is a hero born, descending in a direct line from the celestial stem, by Momus and Hybris, who

pretend to do is to state our impressions. We abandon criticism to others. We fancy that we see how it ought to conduct itself; but having been witnesses in our time of some signal failures in the Aristarchian art, we have become diffident of our own opinions.

If we were to attempt to determine the genius of a man, we should endeavour, we think, to show the general rather than the particular qualities of it. We do not say that the mere amount should be given, without any specification of the items that constitute it; but that a wide and philosophic view should be aimed at, rather than a microscopic survey of its minuter parts. The stature and outline and expres-

begat Zoilus, who begat Tigellius, who begat Etcætera the elder, who begat Bentley and Rymer, and Wooton, and Perrault, and Dennis, who begat Etcætera the younger"—The Dean did not live to complete the pedigree.

sion,—the strength and weakness,—in a word the character, should be studied and rendered; not sacrificed to minute and hypercritical details. In the medium between the two errors—a vague estimate (or guess) on the one hand, and a petty scrutiny on the other,—the merit and safety (*medio tutissimus*) of criticism consists. We should view our subject on every side, and upon all occasions. We should make allowances for every accidental circumstance; and judge him dispassionately, and from a proper distance. A painter transfers to his canvas neither the dim form of the person whom he would represent, nor every individual hair or vein that belongs to him; but the clear object, as we meet and see it every day. He knows that a picture is intended, not to authenticate the marks which are found on the human body; but in order that a man (when he

shall be dead, or absent,) may be recognised by his friends.

For these and other reasons, we have been desirous of abstaining from a precise or judicial air, when speaking of our hero's merits; preferring to give our impressions merely, and leaving the reader at full liberty to adopt them or not as he pleases. Authors are too apt to affect the Dominie, and talk authoritatively to their friends the public. We are but beginners, and take humbler ground. We decide on nothing: we affect no importance. Our aim is to give wings to a dull hour—to gossip with the good-natured reader in his arm-chair, at his breakfast-table, or by his evening fire. If we now and then discuss some little point carelessly, it is with a proper share of diffidence, and without any ambitious views of making a crowd of proselytes.

In this spirit only, we venture to say that we think Kean possessed what few actors can lay claim to, namely, originality. He impressed *character* on almost everything which he attempted. He did not merely recite his part, but act it,—a very different matter. You could not confound his acting with that of any other man; nor, as a consequence, the character which he represented, with any other character in the play. It was (right or wrong) distinguishable from others. This is, after an inferior fashion, what Shakspeare has done, and what Sir Walter Scott, and Cervantes, and Fielding have done. This is, in short, the *Intellectual* Style. There is another style, where the actor or actress exhibits pathos, without character; showing tenderness, grace, gentleness, or sorrow; but nothing more. This may be called the *Lachrymose* Style. Then, there is the grandiloquent, or "Ercles' vein"

or style. And there are also various other methods of acting, which amount to no style at all.

In regard to Kean's private character, we have left it to speak for itself. We are not censors of his morals. Some circumstances in his life, indeed, require neither illustration nor comment. But there are other things, doubtful in fact or uncertain as to motive; and upon these, we think it prudent to be silent. It is not safe, at all times, to judge of men by their deeds alone. Were we *in imo pectore*, we might proclaim our opinions without reserve; but till then, we will show virtue and refrain. Above all, we will not weary ourselves (nor our readers) with any fruitless lamentations, as to what our tragedian *might* have been, had certain purer particles entered into his composition. His qualities, good and bad as they were, formed the man. From them sprang his genius;

his vigour, his character. It was probably the collision between the two, that struck out those brilliant sparks which the world has so long been accustomed to admire. Had he wanted some quality which we deplore, he might have had another, less favourable to the development of his genius. He might have been a truckling parasite, instead of a vain, violent, and reckless man. What was headstrong passion, might have been deliberate roguery. His intemperance might have been exchanged for sober hatred; his ambition for a love of oppression; his mad extravagance for some dark and sordid vice. And here, as some extenuation for his last-mentioned fault, which has found many commentators, we will quote some observations on the subject, from a writer who loved to look charitably on human actions, and who thought that even the extravagance of actors might have some excuse, which the wealthy

and the prudent had not been able to detect.

"With respect to the extravagance of actors, as a traditional character, it is not to be wondered at; they live from hand to mouth; they plunge from want into luxury; they have no means of making money *breed*; and all professions that do not live by turning money into money, or have not a certainty of accumulating it in the end by parsimony, spend it. Uncertain of the future, they make sure of the present moment. This is not unwise. Chilled with poverty, steeped in contempt, they sometimes pass into the sunshine of fortune, and are lifted to the very pinnacle of public favour, yet even there cannot calculate on the continuance of success, but are, 'like the giddy sailor on the mast, ready with every blast to topple down into the fatal bowels of the deep!' Besides, if the young enthusiast who is smitten with the

stage, and with the public as a mistress, were naturally a close hunks, he would become or remain a city clerk, instead of turning player. Again, with respect to the habit of convivial indulgence, an actor to be a good one must have a great spirit of enjoyment in himself, strong impulses, strong passions, and a strong sense of pleasure, for it is his business to imitate the passions and to communicate pleasure to others. A man of genius is not a machine. The neglected actor may be excused if he drinks oblivion of his disappointments: the successful one, if he quaffs the applause of the world, and enjoys the friendship of those who are the friends of the favourites of fortune, in draughts of nectar. There is no path so steep as that of fame; no labour so hard as the pursuit of excellence. The intellectual excitement inseparable from those professions which call forth all our sensibility to pleasure and pain, requires some corresponding physical excitement to

support our failure, and not a little to allay the ferment of the spirits attendant on success. If there is any tendency to dissipation beyond this in the profession of a player, it is owing to the state of public opinion, which paragraphs full of censure are not calculated to reform; and players are only not so *respectable* as a profession as they might be, because their profession is not *respected* as it ought to be."

One word more. We have forborne to touch upon the merits or demerits of any living actor. Not but that we have formed our opinion regarding them. It is impossible, indeed, not to do this in some degree, after having for a long time frequented the theatres. The passion and energy of a player will force itself into our admiration: the sparkling comedy of another, the vapid monotony of a third, will have their due effect. However resolute we may be, their vices and virtues thrust themselves upon

our notice. Whatever vows of indifference we may make, we must weep or laugh or slumber (as the case may be) under the influence of "the followers of Thespis." But, although we must yield in this point to the frailty of the flesh, we may yet forbear to record our opinions. Indeed, prudence and good-nature both prompt us to silence. First, we have a lurking notion, that in order to satisfy the souls of actors, (there are exceptions of course) we must administer a larger portion of honey than we can conscientiously spare. For, notwithstanding they deal in the heroic measure, and are as used to sceptres and robes of ermine as to their every-day meal, yet are they (like all others, authors themselves included)

> "Commanded
> By such poor passion as the maid that milks,
> And does the meanest chares."

And secondly, the poor denizens of the

stage are sufficiently troubled with critics already. Daily, weekly, and monthly, these tormentors sting them in the tenderest places. We will not add to their discomfort. We have received great pleasure in our day, from even the meanest of the sons of Thalia. They have soothed us in times of pain. They have done what neither reason, nor the Leech's aid, nor

"All the drowsy syrups of the East,"

could effect;—they have drawn a sweet oblivion 'round us for a while, and made us forget the world and its many troubles; and we will not requite them with hasty or unjust censures. They are an active and intelligent body of men, and beyond comparison the most amusing company extant.

With this intimation, we leave our hero and his history to their fate.

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LIFE

OF

EDMUND KEAN.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE — MATERNAL ANCESTRY — ABANDONED BY HIS MOTHER—ADOPTED BY MISS TIDSWELL—PUT OUT TO NURSE—HIS APPEARANCE (WHEN A CHILD) AT DRURY LANE THEATRE—RECITES RICHARD III.—INTRODUCED TO MRS. CLARKE—EXHIBITS AT HER HOUSE.

It is a custom of authors, when compiling the history of any one of their great men, to usher in his achievements by some magnificent preamble. In this, the writer, not satisfied with the simple merits of his hero,

inflicts upon him a long and unprofitable pedigree; tracing his ancestry, without help from heralds or affidavits, straight up to the times of Fingal, or the Flood. We shall venture to deviate from this ancient custom.

We are of opinion, that a heavy genealogical foundation is by no means necessary to support a great man's fame. Other persons, we admit, take a different view of the subject. The Chinese, for instance, (who excel even the Welsh in this respect,) derive their kings and conquerors lineally from the moon. For our own parts, we should be content to refer to "The Man" *in* it. Under these impressions, we take leave, upon the present occasion, to tell simply the truth. And should we be accused, hereafter, of having done this at the expense of our tragedian, why "*Be chesm!*" (as the Persians cry out,) "*On our eyes be it!*" We are willing to endure all the obloquy that shall attach to such an original proceeding.

Our prologue, it will be seen, is very brief. That done, we will now proceed to facts.

The birth and parentage of EDMUND KEAN are, apparently, equally unknown. It would have been easy, indeed, from the handsome quantity of materials before us, to have rendered a very satisfactory account of our hero's origin; but we have refrained. Indeed, we feel bound in honour, to declare our belief, that no such information exists as his biographers can use with *entire* confidence. One statement is perpetually opposed to another, and date after date is encountered by denials, and sometimes utterly refuted by subsequent well established facts. Without impeaching the veracity of his historians, we may fairly doubt the fidelity of their memories. And, in regard to the accounts given by Kean himself, (to say nothing of their differing *from each other*,) he was at once so fond of mystification, and so oblivious or

careless of all truth relating to his childhood, that no reliance whatever can be placed upon them.

And, it is not very important, in the history of the remarkable man whose acts we are now about to record, that we should be enabled to specify the precise day and hour of his birth. Enough is known of the general course of his childhood, to assist us in ascribing to certain accidents of fortune, much of the good and evil of his after life.

From his personal appearance at different periods, it is scarcely possible to imagine the year of his birth to have been later than 1787. Miss Tidswell, indeed, places it in 1789; but we think she must have mistaken the year; for he was playing in tragedy, comedy, opera, farce, pantomime, and every line of character, in the early part of 1804, at Sheerness; so that he must at that time

have been at least seventeen years old. In 1806 he was (in Mr. Morris's phrase) "quite a young man," acting man's parts at the Haymarket theatre; and in 1808, when he was married, he bore the appearance of a man of two or three and twenty years of age. In fact, he was under an engagement to marry a young girl in Scotland, as early as the year 1805; a piece of ambition that he would scarcely have been guilty of at the immature age of sixteen years.

We cannot, as we have said, speak with certainty either as to his parentage or birth; but, according to the best conclusions we are able to form, from the conflicting evidence before us, Edmund Kean was the son of one Edmund Kean, by Ann Carey, and was born in the year 1787. Edmund Kean, the supposed father, was in the employ of a Mr. Wilmot, the builder of the Royalty theatre, and whilst occupied there, became intimate

with Miss Carey, at that time an actress. He was, moreover, brother to Moses Kean, a man possessing considerable fame as a general mimic, and who imitated Garrick *in*imitably. Miss Carey herself was the daughter of George Savile Carey, a person who (after acting, without much effect, at Covent Garden, for a single season,) lectured on heads, mimicry, &c., and drew upon that indefinite patrimony, "his wits," for both reputation and support. He died in 1807. Her grandfather, Henry Carey, was author of "Chrononhotonthologos," "The Dragon of Wantley," and various operas and interludes, now with the moths. He is also answerable for a quantity of indifferent ballads, (published under the title of "The Musical Century,") in which he was both writer and composer. This last named gentleman terminated his career unhappily. He perished in his house in Cold Bath Fields,

in the year 1743, having strangled himself with a cord, whilst in a state of despondency. At the time of young Edmund Kean's birth, his grandfather, George Savile Carey, resided in some chambers in Gray's Inn, belonging to a Mr. Turner, who being greatly in debt, and compelled to return the answer of "*non est inventus*" to all obliging inquiries, had lent his chambers to Carey.

And thus ends our knowledge of the ancestors of Edmund Kean.

The introduction of our hero to this world of actors, is derived from Miss Tidswell. "On the 17th of March, 1789," says she, (*we* read 1787,) "at half-past three in the morning, Edmund Kean, the father, came to me, and said—'Nance Carey is with child, and begs you to go to her, at her lodgings in Chancery Lane.' Accordingly I and my aunt went with him, and found Nancy Carey near her time. We asked her if she had proper neces-

saries?' She replied, 'No, nothing;' whereupon Mrs. Byrne begged the loan of some baby clothes, and Nancy Carey was removed to the Chambers, in Gray's Inn, which her father then occupied; and it was there that the boy was born."

This occurrence, which it will be observed took place on

"Saint Patrick's day in the morning,"

is the whole that is known of our player's birth-day history. He was tended, it seems, during the two first years of his life, by his mother; but, at the expiration of that period, she refused to keep him any longer, and Miss Tidswell therefore took him. This lady had already seen him at Richmond, where the mother was acting. Mrs. Price, the father's sister, ("Aunt Price," as she was called,) had been one day at Miss Tidswell's lodgings, and said "Let us go over, and see Ned." Upon

which, the other consenting, both of them went to Richmond together; and there Miss Tidswell, for the first time, cast her eyes upon the future Richard the Third, who had then been four or five months at "the breast." He was even then much neglected, and was afterwards more so; and when Miss Carey declined being troubled any longer with the maternal offices, Miss Tidswell took him, as we have stated, generously offering him, however, in the first instance, to "Aunt Price." "Why not take care of him?" said she, "it will be much better." But Aunt Price, a prudent mantua-maker, declined this proposal, and replied that "she did not wish to have him." In the end, after having been pushed about and rejected like "the mark" at school, the father put out the poor child to nurse with a woman in the neighbourhood of London, who very speedily evinced her qualifications for that tender office, by allowing

her charge to become crooked. He grew bow-legged, knock-kneed, walked on his ankles, and exhibited other symptoms of his nurse's care. All these indications of weakness, however, disappeared long before he became a man. The first remedy applied was in the shape of irons, which the child was compelled to wear on both legs until he was about seven or eight years of age. It seems that he wore these irons continually. There were two sets of them; one for day and the other for night. The former had joints, and there were screws in them, to "screw him up." Mr. Duncan, a gentleman who showed him much kindness at that time, says, "He used to sleep with me and my wife in the irons, *and they hurt us.*"

Some persons have asserted that Kean was never at school; others that he was a scholar at Eton. Both these assertions were incorrect. His education, indeed, was of the very slen-

derest sort; but some attempts were certainly made to whip the elements of knowledge into him. He was sent by Miss Tidswell to a little day-school in London; but he would not learn any thing. He hated most unfeignedly the confinement and labour of school, (probably he had tasted its discipline); and in this dislike originated that habit of running away from his friends when any thing went wrong, which never forsook him up to the day of his marriage. Instead of going to the little school, he would play truant for a couple of days at a time, and in the end quitted the "Academy," as little oppressed by learning, of any sort, as can well be imagined. He was afterwards at another school, in Chapel-street, Soho, kept by a Mr. King, where he remained between two and three years; but the amount of his progress there is not reported.

During the early years of his life, his

mother, after abandoning him to Miss Tidswell, pursued her usual itinerant habits; being sometimes with strolling companies at provincial theatres and fairs, and at others going from house to house with flowers, powder, pomatum, &c., for sale. When the boy grew old enough to accompany her, she took him with her; not for any assistance that he could render, but because of his appearance, which was in a high degree interesting, and promoted the sale of her wares. Previously to this time, however, and, in fact, when he was scarcely two years of age, he appeared in some opera as "Cupid." There is no doubt but that his beauty, which in childhood was always remarkable, recommended him to this celestial post. Indeed, during the performance, some old lady, in the fulness of her dotage, inquired if he were "*really* a living child."

The following anecdote, given by Michael

Kelly in his "Reminiscences," differs little in effect from Kean's own recollections on the subject. He is speaking of the opera of "CYMON." Michael's style is incomparably more curious than the anecdote itself. If the latter part of the paragraph be true, our hero's gratitude must have commenced at the tender age of two years! "Before the piece was brought out, I had a number of children brought to me, that I might choose a Cupid. One struck me, with a fine pair of black eyes, who seemed, by his looks and *little* gestures, most anxious to be chosen as the *little* god of love. I chose him, and *little* did I then imagine that my *little* Cupid would eventually become a great actor: the then *little* urchin was neither more nor less than—Edmund Kean. He has often told me that he *ever after this period* (!) felt a regard for me, from the circumstance of my having preferred him to the other children. I con-

sider MY having been the means of INTRODUCING THIS GREAT GENIUS TO THE STAGE (!!!), one of my most pleasurable recollections." The reader has our full authority to laugh at this burlesque.

We afterwards (about 1794 or 1795) find Master Carey at Drury Lane, where he acted Blue Beard; not indeed the full-grown bloody bashaw, who cuts the matrimonial knot with such dexterity, but the innocent diminutive *boy*-Blue Beard, who, before the commencement of the tragedy, appears in perspective, riding over the hills. He also formed one of the band of little devils with which John Kemble enlivened one of the scenes in "Macbeth." Kean himself admitted this, and also that he tripped up his brother goblins,—"They fell like a pack of cards." Mr. Kemble was angry at the young actor's going out of his part, thumped him, and would not allow him again to mis-

behave,—as a spirit. Nevertheless, he afterwards filled a few child's parts at the same theatre. He played the *Page* in "Love makes a Man," the *Page* to Sir John Falstaff, and other things; relieving however the tedium of his existence by imitating Jack Bannister and other famous players. He also about this time began to recite Rolla's address to the Peruvians, Satan's address to the sun, and portions of Richard the Third, &c., at various places. Mrs. Charles Kemble recollects hearing a clanking noise at the theatre one night, and on inquiring as to the cause, was answered, "It is only little Kean reciting Richard the Third in the green-room; he's acting after the manner of Garrick. Will you go and see him? He is really very clever." And there he was, "*really* very clever," acting to a semicircle of gazers, and exhibiting the fierceness, and possibly some of the niceties

of that character, in which, fifteen years afterwards, he drew to the theatre (which he enriched and adorned) thousands and thousands of spectators, and built up for himself a renown that will last—that *must* last—as long as "the actor's fame."

It was during one of Miss Carey's circuits, with her powder and flowers, that she called at the house of Mr. Young, a surgeon, the father of Charles Young, the tragedian. This gentleman received her, patronised her, and recommended her to Mrs. Clarke, the wife of Mr. Clarke, of Guildford Street, who was then staying in his house. The whole story of little Kean's first acquaintance with this lady not only reflects credit on her discrimination, but is interesting in itself. The particulars from which the following account is taken, are derived from one who was an eye-witness of all that occurred.

Mr. Young commences the history by

introducing the mother of the future tragedian to his patroness: "Here is a very charming woman, the daughter of your favourite lecturer, George Savile Carey. She can supply you with French perfumery and Mareschalle powder, genuine and cheap." Mrs. Clarke looked up at the powder-merchant, and saw a pair of brilliant eyes, exactly like those of her father. She made some purchases, as may be supposed, and intimated an intention of making others in future. In consequence of this, Miss Carey afterwards took the lady's house in her rounds, regularly calling with her cases of perfumery, &c., some of which the lady as regularly bought. In the course of the conversations that arose on these visits, Miss Carey, (probably in answer to some inquiry on the subject,) explained that she acted at theatres of an inferior order, accompanied by her brother, who also bore the name of

Carey. He played on the guitar, and both together exhibited a sort of duet-drama, at Richmond and various other places in the neighbourhood of London. She also spoke of her own "very clever little boy," mentioning however that he was then with a Roman Catholic lady, who took him to mass. The master of the chapel had, she said, with her leave, made him "one of the choir boys, whose office it was to throw incense and sing." She proceeded to consult Mrs. Clarke on this subject, when that lady advised her to let the boy remain under the lady's protection, and be brought up by her and put out to some trade,—to anything, in short, rather than to her own itinerant and uncertain way of life. Mrs. Clarke urged, in addition, the fact of his great talents, and the advantage that the mother might reasonably hope to make of them. After the fashion of persons enduring advice, all the

unanswerable arguments were assented to by Miss Carey; and she, eventually, disclosed how far she had benefited by them, by confessing to Mrs. Clarke that—she had withdrawn her "very clever little boy" altogether from his Roman Catholic friend. He no longer sung or swung incense. The priest had lost his proselyte, the Roman Catholic lady her protégé. In exchange for his flowing robes and fuming censers, Master Carey had now the privilege of wandering about from place to place, with his mother; bearing her burthens of powder and pomatum; perhaps seconding her efforts to dispose of her merchandise; or stepping in with his testimony, when any of the customers were infidels enough to imagine that the Mareschalle powder was not "genuine." He was an intelligent, merry, reckless boy; and, in a state not very distant from starvation, might

be seen laughing, talking, and singing (not, we suspect, after the choir fashion), and

"Putting the spirit of youth in every thing."

Such was his occupation, when Miss Carey, after receiving from Mrs. Clarke certain superfluous finery, proposed one day to make that lady acquainted personally with him. The following is the history of his first appearance at Mrs. Clarke's.

A thundering rap is heard at the door. The footman, with an approximation to a grin on his face, enters and announces—"Master Carey, ma'am."—"Master Carey?" was the inquiry. "Yes, ma'am; he comes from his mother, *Miss* Carey, who brings the perfumery here to sell. He *says* he is Master Carey." "Show him up by all means." Mrs. Clarke stood. The door was thrown open, and a slim pale boy, of about ten years old,

enters—very poorly clad, ragged, with dirty hands, face washed, delicate skin, brilliant eyes, superb head of curled and matted hair, and a piece of a hat in his hand! With the bow and air of a prince, he delivers his message: "My mother, madam, sends her duty, and begs you will be so good as to lend her a shilling to take the spangled tiffany petticoat out of pawn, as she wants it to appear in at Richmond to-morrow." In answer to this petition, the lady put forth an interrogation; "Are you the little boy who can act so well?" A bow of assent, and a kindling cheek were the sole reply. "What can you act?"—The answer was, "Richard the Third—Speed the Plough—Hamlet—and Harlequin." "I should like very much to see you," said the lady. "I should be proud to act to you," was the return. "Well, here's the money for your mother," said Mrs. Clarke; "but stay," added she, throwing open the door of the

back drawing-room, where her husband sate writing. He was a grave stout man, who had left off going to plays. She brought forward our hero: "This is little Edmund Carey." A low bow from Master Edmund Carey finished the introduction. Mr. Clarke looked at him, and was struck with his air, as well as with his delicate and expressive features, and which, contrasted with the poverty of his clothes, must have touched and interested even the commonest observer. We do not know what commendation or good advice was bestowed by Mr. Clarke; but Mrs. Clarke and her young friend parted, with a promise, on his part, that he would come again at six o'clock that evening, and give a specimen of his acting. In the meantime, the lady, filled with the merits of her protégé, ran to her next door neighbour (who was the well-known Mr. John Mason Good), and to three or four other friends, and

invited them all to come and see her "extraordinary little boy."

In the evening the friends arrived, sufficiently sceptical as to the "little boy's" talents, but not without some curiosity to see after what fashion they and their hostess were to be disappointed. The hour arrived —six o'clock; but Master Carey was still absent. At last, the same thundering rap which had preceded his advent in the morning, sounded again upon the door. It was certainly he. The lady flew to the head of the stair-case, in order to be the first to welcome her protégé, and also that she might receive him alone; for she was jealous as to the impression which he was to make, and was apprehensive lest those humble auxiliaries, soap and water, might be necessary in order to all-perfect her hero. But no: his face was clean, the delicacy of his complexion was more obvious than before, and

his beautiful hair had been combed, and shone like the wing of a raven. His dress, indeed, had suffered no improvement; but a frilled handkerchief of his mother's was tucked inside his jacket, and was more than a substitute for a shirt collar. He was a new man. His friend was satisfied and proud. At the same time, in order the more completely to qualify him for the task which he was about to undertake, she took him secretly to her dressing-room, summoned her maid, and despatched her for some black ribband, in order to substitute something heroic for the commercial pack-thread which ornamented his shoes. They then commenced a search for other finery; and at last came upon a black riding-hat, with feathers in it. This prize was seized upon, turned up in front with pins, and accommodated to his head; and, to put a finishing stroke to this grand equipment, a real sword and belt were found, which were

buckled on the tragedian without delay. Never had he looked so magnificent, even in his dreams!

The lady led him, beaming with delight, into the drawing-room, and presented him to her assembled friends. They sat in a silent circle, and surveyed him. Had time permitted, they might have smiled; but scarcely allowing himself time to bow, he rushed eagerly to the further end of the room, which had been fixed upon as a stage, (and where there was a door for his exit and entrance, and a curtain for a scene,) and began. It was no small task that lay before him. He had to face the smiles of an audience sceptical of his talents, and to conquer them: yet he did this—nay, he did more; for the expression in the countenances of his audience changed from contempt (or distrust) into attention,—from attention to admiration,—to silent wonder,—to tears! He,

who was not then ten years old, shewed them how the patriotism of Rolla, and the bloody policy of Richard, ought, and was thereafter to be exhibited. They were deaf to the prophecy, indeed; but they were, nevertheless, well pleased with the ingenious little player, and rewarded him with a shower of shillings and sixpences, which he would not pick up! The money however was forced on him at last, and he was sent home richer than he had ever been before, and flushed with success. Lest the reader should apprehend danger to him from this sudden influx of wealth, be it known that "Miss Carey" took the precaution of invariably relieving him from such incumbrances, until he arrived at years of—*discretion.*

CHAPTER II.

PROTECTED BY MRS. CLARKE—RUNS AWAY—ENTERS RICHARDSON'S COMPANY—ACTS BEFORE KING GEORGE THE THIRD—HIS TRUANT HABITS—HIS THEATRICAL EDUCATION UNDER MISS TIDSWELL—QUESTION AS TO HIS DESCENT FROM THE DUKE OF NORFOLK.

MRS. CLARKE did not give up the boy when he had ceased to amuse her. On the contrary, she invited him continually to her house, and endeavoured to find out some mode of benefiting him. An opportunity not presenting itself very readily, she proposed to take him altogether from his mother. This was gladly assented to, and the child was transferred to Mrs. Clarke's protection, on the understanding that whatever he should obtain from his exhibitions before private

friends should, after retaining a small portion to pay the expense of masters, be given to his mother. It was under these circumstances that he was taught to dance, to fence, and to ride, and that he received instruction in various other ways. For the purpose of enabling him to receive these lessons uninterruptedly, he was kept at a lodging; so near to Mrs. Clarke's house, however, as to be within reach of immediate controul. His studies were varied by occasional performances before private parties, at the houses of his protectress and of her friends. Previously to these, she would lend him books, recite to him, hear him rehearse, and in other respects afford him her counsel. But when he gave his dramatic entertainments, all the characters were sustained by himself:

"He had his exits and his entrances,
And [truly] in *his* time played many parts."

He had moreover a little bell, which he rang when the imaginary music was to begin; after which he entered, soliloquised, went through the dialogue (on both sides), fought, frowned, triumphed, and died, with ten times the applause of ordinary heroes. When the exhibition was to take place at any other house than that of Mrs. Clarke, he was sent there, in her carriage, with his dramatic "properties," consisting of a hat and feathers, a sword, and white gloves: in other respects he wore the common costume of the day. He generally resorted to Shakspeare for his subjects, but would sometimes make little plays out of Spenser's Fairy Queen. And for his own amusement, in his leisure hours, he would frequently play on the piano-forte, by ear, or invent tunes, having however a book of music (which he could *not* read) always before him. From all accounts, he appears to have been docile

during this interval of his life; so completely so indeed, that we, now and then, try to think that the fact of his having been such an utter rebel and truant at other times, may be attributed in *some* degree to the idle and vagabond examples before him, rather than to a temper absolutely impracticable. He was, it is true, somewhat passionate, but the report is that he was generous also, and was liked by all persons about him. To speak of his humbler doings,—his agility at this period was remarkable, for "he could throw himself into all sorts of postures, and climb like a monkey." He sang prettily also, and shewed a great talent for mimicry. Some of our readers may remember that he occasionally gave proofs of these last-mentioned accomplishments in the latter part of his life.

He dwelt nearly two years under the protection of Mrs. Clarke, and finally quitted it by reason of the following circumstance:

A gentleman and lady, with their two daughters, had come to Guildford Street on a visit. Upon this occasion, Edmund Carey, who at that time went to school in Hatton Garden, obtained a holiday, and delighted the little girls with his acting. In the evening, they were all to go to the theatre; and a discussion arising at dinner as to how the party were to be conveyed there, the mistress of the house began to reckon up the play-goers, naming amongst them "Edmund." Upon this, the gentleman (he must have been, as Iago says, "a silly gentleman,") exclaimed, "What, does *he* sit in the box with us?" The answer was, "Oh, yes." The question, however, involving as it did a doubt as to his fitness for the company into which he thus chanced to be thrown, was sufficient for the irritability of the boy. He would eat no more, but rose from the table, and, notwithstanding his friend pressed him to go into

the pit, (an injudicious compromise of the question, we think,) and tendered him money for the purpose, flung out of the room and disappeared. He was not at the theatre that evening, nor did he return home. He had fled—no one knew whither.

After the lapse of three weeks, however, during which time many vain inquiries were made after him, he was brought back by a man who lived in an adjoining mews, having been found there sleeping on a dunghill, in a state of exhaustion, ragged and foot-sore, and altogether in squalid disorder. He shewed much remorse, and being called upon to explain where he had been, answered that he had resolved to go to America, and had actually travelled on foot as far as Bristol. None of the seafaring men, however, to whom he applied would receive him into their vessels, on account of his being so little, and apparently so weak. He returned to

London, therefore, as well as he could, sleeping in outhouses, begging food, and enduring all sorts of distress and fatigue by the way.

This event determined Mr. Clarke to relinquish the protection which he (or rather his wife, by his permission) had hitherto extended to the poor player-boy. In order, however, that his departure might not wear the character of dismission, a little benefit was made up for him, which, at all events, put him into a condition to encounter fortune for some short time to come. That over, he was flung back upon "the world." At this time he appeared to be about twelve years of age.

On his leaving Mrs. Clarke's house, he was furnished by her with a recommendation to Captain Millar, of the Staffordshire militia, which was then stationed at Windsor. He went to Windsor accordingly; and it must have been on this occasion that he was seen,

an active member, in Richardson's company of strollers. The probability is, that, on leaving Mrs. Clarke, he enrolled himself in Richardson's troop, to which his mother at that time belonged; and that both parent and child travelled to Windsor with the company. This was the first time that Master Carey ever beheld Eton, or the "antique towers" which Gray has celebrated. The story of his having been educated there is altogether false. It is much more like the truth, that he and his brother actors should have been pelted by the Eton boys, because those ambitious scholars were refused the privilege of drawing the manager's caravan into the town. This story, which is told as coming from the mouth of old Richardson, receives some confirmation from divers hints and expressions, now indistinctly remembered, which dropped from Kean in his after life, when he was recounting his first appearance

before King George the Third. For that he was at Windsor, and played before that monarch, who requited him with two guineas, is certain; the fact having been not only asserted by himself, but confirmed by Mrs. Heath, wife of the former master of Eton school. "We had your husband for two or three days," observed she to Mrs. Kean, "when he was a boy. The Eton boys were so fond of hearing him, that they asked Dr. Heath to permit him to recite, which he assented to. It was thus that the king heard of him, and had him to recite before him." Whether it was considered necessary to disfigure the little player, as has been stated, with the second-hand finery of a Jew's shop, in order to render him acceptable to royal eyes, appears uncertain. It is likely enough that the manager might think that he was not fine enough to spout "before a king," without some tawdry additions to

his wardrobe. We ourselves should have been satisfied with him in more simple attire; for, although it is written of a dignified clergyman that

> "All his reverend wit
> Lay in his wardrobe,"

this could never have been said of Kean, even when he was only twelve years old. His wit was always more laical.

Of the theatrical feats which Richardson's company performed at Windsor, it is not our cue to speak. It has been said that our hero's mother took the market-hall for three nights, and filled it by means of her son's recitations; but this is problematical: we cannot vouch for the fact. It is tolerably certain, however, that Miss Carey was in the habit of telling fortunes, and that she told them at this particular period at Windsor; with such success indeed, that she was dismissed with great expedition (lighter by

the weight of some silver spoons than was desirable to her) by the unrelenting authorities there. Of course "Master Carey" followed in her wake.

The mother and boy, in all probability, rejoined Richardson's troop, after the Windsor expedition, and accompanied it through its usual summer campaign. Kean, in fact, has often said that his first appearance in a "principal" part, was when he acted *Young Norval* in Richardson's company. He received something more than usual for the attempt, which Miss Carey, as usual, abstracted. Nevertheless, he seems to have continued strolling about with her, from place to place, swelling her theatrical gains. He was not philosophically content under his privations, however; for he repeatedly murmured, and in extreme cases ran away, "because," as he said, "she took *all* my money." These truant habits existed all his

life, with the exception only of the time when he lived with Mrs. Clarke. On such occasions, when he thought fit to quit his mother, on account of her affection for his salary, he deserted to Miss Tidswell, whom he left, in turn, because she beat him: he then went over to Aunt Price, and again quitted her, when, as it is said, "every thing was not to his taste."

It is difficult to say where his home lay at this time, if, indeed, he could be said to have any. He was, in effect, migratory. Perhaps Miss Tidswell may boast of having had the most of his society, although she was perpetually under the necessity of reclaiming him. At one time, he started off, and found his way to Portsmouth, without a penny in his pocket: whether he acted or begged by the way is not known. The account which he gave on his return was, that he slept in barns and out-houses, and ate turnips. At

another time, he ran away from Miss Tidswell, and found his way to a public-house near Vauxhall, where it appeared that he had employed his vacation in singing to the customers; his gains, however, being duly handed over to the landlord, who, in return for his services, supplied him with such board and lodging as a public-house at Vauxhall may be supposed to offer to an adventurer of this description. After some enquiries, Miss Tidswell discovered him in this retreat, and pounced upon him without ceremony whilst he was enacting the character of minstrel,—the spirit of song full upon him! According to his own account, she tied a rope round his waist, upon this occasion, and dragged him home. And, as a last desperate resource, she put a brass collar round his neck, with the words "*Theatre Royal, Drury Lane*" upon it. But he was wilder than the quagga. Whatever chance of reforming him might have

existed at one time, neither punishment nor kindness, scolding nor remonstrance, rope nor collar, could now reduce him to the level of a civilised being. He was like one of those creatures born in the woods, who never forget the savage freedom of their early life, and whom no ingenuity of man can tame.

That he was indebted to Miss Tidswell for his early and best theatrical education is beyond a doubt. He has acknowledged it frequently. She taught him his parts, by reading the speeches to him, and making him afterwards repeat them before her, with the proper emphasis. The first character of any importance which he filled at Drury Lane (that of Arthur in "King John,") he learned in this way, and got some credit by it. In order to prevent that vague sort of mouthing common to boys, and to beget in him the habit of sustaining dialogue with real persons, she used to place him before a picture, and compelled him to

address his speeches to it. And, in furtherance of the same system, she would change a fictitious name into a real one, and endeavour thus to excite his sympathy. As an instance of this, when she taught him the speech which Hamlet utters over the grave, she made him in the first place say, "Alas, poor uncle!"—his uncle, Moses Kean (who, like Yorick, was a facetious person) having lost a limb. When the boy's sympathy was raised, and the necessary emphasis and expression attained, the change of words from "uncle" into "Yorick," was easily managed. There is something at least very ingenious in this method of schooling. Upon minds not readily impressible, similar experiments might be made, we think, with a great chance of success.

Was Miss Tidswell related to him? This is a question which has often been asked; but by no one so often as by Kean himself.

"Why did she take so much trouble about me," he would say, "if I was not related to her? She did not like me; or, if she did, she didn't appear to do so. She kept me, indeed, but she used to thump me often enough, and tie me to the bed-post; and, at last, she put a collar round my neck, as though I had been a dog." He was himself very doubtful of "Miss Carey's" claim to the honour of being his mother. Her utter indifference towards him in his childhood, added to her habit of fleecing him of every penny that he earned, in some degree, it must be owned, justified this unfilial scepticism.

It has been repeatedly asserted that Miss Tidswell was really his mother, and that he owed his existence to her and to the late Duke of Norfolk. The lady, however, resolutely denies the maternity, and there is no forcing upon her an honour which she is

inclined to reject. Yet, to shew how very generally this opinion was entertained, and also to give a specimen of a great man's officiousness, we are assured that soon after Kean had established his fame in London, one of his patrons, Sir —— ——, waited upon the tragedian, and insisted that "*as* Miss Tidswell was his mother, he ought to settle something handsome upon her." Kean, without disputing the premises, was indignant at this interference in his private concerns: nevertheless, he sent, or promised to send (for the memory of our informant is imperfect on this point) some money to the lady, as an acknowledgment of her early care. The money, or the offer, must, however, have been declined by Miss Tidswell, if it were ever tendered; for there is no proof of any sum having been paid to her.

Not only did Miss Tidswell reject our

poor hero, but the Duke of Norfolk disclaimed him also; be it observed, however, with fitting respect. It happened thus:—Kean was one night playing Richard the Third at Drury Lane, in his first season, when Lord Essex, on going out of his box into the lobby, encountered the Duke, and addressed him with the pertinent question, "Why don't you acknowledge your son?" The hereditary Earl Marshal was naturally staggered by such an interrogation, and retorted, "What son?" "Why, Kean," answered the lord; "It is reported generally that he is your son, and that Miss Tidswell is his mother."—"I assure you," replied the Duke, "that I should be very proud to acknowledge him. But this is the first intimation that I have received on the subject." These distinct assaults upon the imaginary parents of the tragedian are ridiculous enough; but

the result seems to establish the fact, that Kean must look elsewhere for his parentage; and that the blood that ran racing through his veins, had no right to claim any alliance with that patrician stream, which circled in the hearts of "all the Howards."

CHAPTER III.

HIS RECITATIONS IN LONDON—GOES TO MADEIRA—IS A STROLLER IN SCOTLAND—RIDES A RACE—EARLY ATTACHMENTS—ACQUAINTANCE WITH RAE—ENTERS THE SHEERNESS COMPANY—ACTS WITH MRS. SIDDONS—SWIMS ACROSS THE THAMES—JOINS THE HAYMARKET CORPS—RETURNS TO SHEERNESS.

It has been already stated that "Master Carey," on quitting the protection of his friends in Guildford Street, went strolling about from place to place, sometimes with his mother, but occasionally acting alone. Of this time there are several authentic anecdotes preserved, which it is nevertheless difficult to attribute to any particular year. They range from the time when the boy was twelve till he was fourteen years of age. In

this interval, he is known to have spoken Rolla's address to the Peruvians at Covent Garden, for the benefit of Mr. Knight (the manager of the Liverpool theatre); but being hoarse on account of his having previously recited several speeches at the Sans Souci, he received no applause. This was probably about 1799 or 1800. The Sans Souci here referred to was a little theatre or exhibition-room in Leicester Place (the same, we believe, formerly rented by the celebrated Dibdin), where readings were given, and poetry and speeches recited. Sometimes there were moving scenes, similar to the Dioramas given in modern pantomimes, with voices issuing from behind, reciting poetry descriptive of the scenes that were passing. There were also, about the same time, similar establishments at the Crown and Anchor, at some rooms near Lincoln's Inn Fields, and in Chancery Lane;

at one or more of which places Kean appeared. He is said, in fact, to have read the whole of "The Merchant of Venice" at the Rolls' Rooms, Chancery Lane, where he was announced as "The infant prodigy, Master Carey." The late Mrs. Plumtre, (who was very intimate with Kean, in his later life,) speaking one day of the entertainments in Leicester Place, said, "I used to be very much pleased with the person who spoke the poetry at the Sans Souci." "Do you wish to know who it was that spouted that poetry?" said Kean, turning over head and heels in his drawing-room in Clarges Street, "Know, then,—'twas I."

When he was about fourteen, he recited Rolla's address (which seems to have been a favorite with him) at Sadler's Wells. He was also seen there as a spectator, at the time when Belzoni (afterwards the well-known and indefatigable traveller) was exhi-

biting there as a posturer; but it does not appear that he was retained permanently by any of the theatres. He was oftener to be found a member of one or other of those irregular troops,—Richardson's, Saunders's, Scowton's, &c.,—who wander about, like bands of Arabs, from fair to market, and from country to town, bewitching the eyes and hearts and money of the unenlightened; and reaping just sufficient from each exhibition to drive famine from the door. In these encampments, Kean, or rather "Master Carey," as he still continued to be called, was wont to perform various feats on horseback and the tight rope, as well as in "the regular drama;" and upon one occasion (this is said to have happened at Bartholomew Fair) he injured his shins so severely whilst riding in the ring, that his legs, (otherwise exceedingly well-shaped,) never entirely recovered their original beauty.

There was always an enlargement of the bone, or a projection of some sort, in front of the legs just over the instep, not however, of sufficient magnitude to amount to a deformity, or in fact observable on a casual survey.

At what precise period of his life Kean was at Madeira is unknown; but that he was there once appears certain. The fact rests upon more than one statement, and is confirmed by his own assertions—with a difference; he himself insisting that he went out as a midshipman, and the other accounts stating that he was entered as a cabin boy. Both agree, however, in the circumstance of his having been left at the land whence "London particular" is derived, in a state of extreme sickness, and of his return, after a brief absence, to England and the unlimited delights of a stroller's life.

It must have been after this that he first

cast his eyes on the bonnie blue hills of Scotland. In one of those indiscreet moments, such as tempt rustics to forsake their friend the plough for the questionable honour of serving King William in a military capacity, he enlisted himself as a member of a ragged company of comedians, which was then traversing the prudent land of North Britain; waging war upon the pockets of the kail-gatherers, and extracting, as it turned out, exceedingly small portions of "siller" therefrom. By way of diversion, Kean (who became tired, in the course of time, even of the luxuries of brose and oatmeal) struck out an acquaintance with a gentleman who had a passion for racing. At the time of our hero's introduction to him, this person had engaged in a match, where the owners were to ride their own horses. Kean's acquaintance, however, being disabled from using horse exercise,

suggested that our hero should be his substitute; which being agreed to, the new jockey mounted with alacrity, whipped and spurred with all his characteristic energy, and finally —lost the match with more than ordinary spirit. That he should have done this, notwithstanding he was opposed by *gentlemen* riders (a race who, for talent, may be compared to private actors), is an achievement that ought not to be forgotten. It is a curious feature in the story, that this discomfiture should have drawn closer the link between Kean and his new ally. Their acquaintance afterwards warmed into an intimacy, and the player-boy, for a time, lived with his friend, until the pecuniary circumstances of the latter driving him into confinement in Holyrood-house, the amicable partnership was dissolved.

During his stay in Scotland, and whilst he was strolling with the company to which

he was attached (it was Moss's company, we believe), he and his confederates were repeatedly reduced to the last degree of poverty. Cold and hunger were their companions; empty houses and supercilious looks their bitter fortune. They were all alike, tragedy, comedy, opera, and farce, "sisters four,"—equally wretched and helpless. In this republic of misfortune, the manager himself was merely a man—a fellow as hungry and penniless as the rest—with no right beyond the others, except to suffer with double the patience of his followers. In their extremity, a person with whom Kean had made acquaintance, clubbed with some friends, and sent them a purse, containing several pounds. It was like water in the desert, and saved them from utter despair.

Acting, however, was not Kean's "sole ambition and serene employ;" for in the course of his tour through Scotland, he

imagined himself to be attached to a young girl, and in fact agreed to marry her. The impression remained but a short time, however; for on his return to London, he very speedily dismissed the damsel from his mind, (he knew the line—

"At *lovers'* perjuries, they say, Jove laughs,")

and threw his whole heart into the lap of a certain Miss Maria Germain, who was at that time apprenticed to his aunt, Mrs. Price. Mrs. Price fomented this second love-fever. She was, in fact, very desirous that he should marry Maria; but there was some objection made to the match (we believe by Miss Carey), and Aunt Price's benevolent designs were ultimately thwarted. During the intimacy that existed between the young people (and it lasted for some time), "heaps of love-letters," it is said, were written by both parties. The particulars of these little

missives have not reached us; otherwise we should certainly have ventured to embody one or two of them, as specimens of the simplicity of seventeen, in this our humble history.

It does not appear that Kean, in his early life, formed an acquaintance with any one who afterwards gained a reputation on the stage, with the single exception of Mr. Rae. Young Rae was the son of the matron of Saint George's Hospital; and his mother being well known to Mrs. Price, with whom Kean was often a resident, an intimacy arose and existed for a short time between the two boys. Whether the introduction to our hero begat in Rae a desire of theatrical distinction, or he was previously stage-struck, is unknown. It is most probable that, as Kean must have been a veteran actor at the commencement of this acquaintance, he inoculated his companion's mind

with the theatrical mania. It is known that the boys frequently acted together. Mrs. Price used to drink tea with Mrs. Rae now and then, and upon these occasions she took young Kean with her, who invariably armed himself with her yard measure, (the only sword which he could obtain,) and he and Rae alternately wielded it, as the necessities of their drama—the "*minor* drama"—demanded. Kean has repeatedly adverted to this old intimacy, and asserted that he was the person who originally "taught Alexander Rae the speech of Norval." Poor Rae! he benefited little by the tuition. His head was intended for other purposes than for the comprehension of character.

We now arrive at the year 1804, at which time, we apprehend, Kean was about seventeen years of age.

"Mr. Kean,"—writes Mr. Jerrold, the well-known and talented author of 'The Rent

Day,'—" Mr. Kean joined the Sheerness company on Easter Monday, 1804. He was then still in boy's costume. He opened in *George Barnwell*, and *Harlequin*, in a Pantomime. His salary was fifteen shillings per week. He then went under the name of Carey. He continued to play the whole round of tragedy, comedy, opera, farce, interlude, and pantomime, until the close of the season. His comedy was very successful. In *Watty Cockney* and *Risk*, and in the song 'Unfortunate Miss Bailey,' he made a great impression upon the tasteful critics of Sheerness. On leaving the place, he went to Ireland, and from Ireland to Mr. Baker's company at Rochester. It was about this time (as I have heard my father say, who had it from Kean himself) that Mr. Kean, being without money to pay the toll of a ferry, tied his wardrobe in his pocket-handkerchief, and swam the river."

It was in the course of the visit to Ireland, referred to by Mr. Jerrold, that Kean once trod the stage in company with Mrs. Siddons. He was acting at Belfast, when Mrs. Siddons, who was engaged for a few nights as a "star," arrived there.

There are two versions of this story. One is derived from Kean, and the other rests on very respectable authority. We shall venture to give them both, therefore, as they are short.

The first is this:—Mrs. Siddons was to open her engagement in *Zara*, Kean playing *Osmyn*. As usual, instead of learning his part, he employed the interim between her arrival and the play, in drinking with some friends, with such success, that when he came upon the stage, the whole of his part had vanished from his memory. He could not recollect more than two or three lines, and was therefore reduced to the necessity of inventing

as he went on:—it may easily be supposed with what effect. His performance was a tissue of nonsense; sentences without meaning; tawdry phrases; drunken absurdities of all sorts. His auditors, luckily, were not critical; but the "star" of the evening looked lowering upon him, and expressed her unmitigated disgust. The next play to be performed was Douglas, and in this Kean played *Young Norval* to Mrs. Siddons's *Lady Randolph*. Whether he was ashamed of the past, or was ambitious of showing the great tragic actress that "he too was an actor," we cannot say; but he played the part with infinite pathos and spirit. Mrs. Siddons was surprised into admiration. After the play (this is Kean's own account) she came to him, and patting him on the head, said—"You have played very well, sir, *very* well. It's a pity,—*but there's too little of you to do any thing.*" The reader will smile over this prophecy, and its refutation.

The next story runs as follows:—Mrs. Siddons was to appear in one of her great characters; but when the time came for rehearsing the play, she was so unwell or fatigued with travelling, that it was requested, as a favour, that the company would meet at her lodgings to go through the ceremony of rehearsal. This was acceded to, and the performers accordingly recited their several portions of dialogue before her, in that style which, as the critics say, "calls for no particular remark." There was one exception, however, to this easy mode of delivery, and that was in the person of the little man who was to play one of the secondary characters. He did not, it seems, think it sufficient to mar the poetry of Shakspeare, after the fashion of our modern professors of elocution. He was ambitious of *illustrating* the text. And accordingly, although he had not a great deal to do, he endeavoured to do his

best. Whilst the other players went through their parts, the great actress looked on and listened; now and then correcting their emphasis or accent, or suggesting some alteration; but when the little man spoke, she gazed at him very stedfastly, and, on his ceasing, said in her grave and weighty manner—"Very well, sir—very well. I have never heard that part given in the same way before." The "little man" was Kean. It was once said of him, in ridicule, when he was playing the trifling part of Carney, in *Ways and Means*,—"He's trying to act: the little fellow's making a part of Carney." We can easily imagine that the same thing might have been said of him in this instance; "He's trying to make a part of ——." And so he *was!* And so he did in Shylock, and in Richard, and in Othello—and *he succeeded!* And it was this "trying to make a part," or, in other words, in these strenuous endeavours

to penetrate and incorporate himself with the characters which he represented, that bore him upwards to the topmost step of the tragic drama.

(1805). Returning from Ireland, our hero entered into an engagement with Mr. Baker, the manager of the Rochester Theatre, and afterwards, during the same year, played at Dover, and other small towns in that part of England. Amongst other places, he had engaged to act for a night or two at Braintree, in Essex; but on the day fixed for his appearance, he found himself in the county of Kent, with the River Thames between him and the rest of the performers. What to do, was the question. He had arrived at the river, it is true, but he had not a *sous* in his pocket; and he disdained (as we may imagine) assailing the grim Charon of the Thames with any vain importunities. A few years afterwards, and he might have com-

manded the ferryman's services by the mere mention of his name: "CÆSAREM *vehis!*" But at this period Fashion had not "marked him for her own." He was compelled to call physical instead of "metaphysical aid" to his service. Stripping himself, therefore, without delay, he tied his clothes in his pocket-handkerchief, and seizing the bundle with his teeth, plunged into the river. After huge exertions, he reached the opposite shore. Unluckily, in the course of his passage, his head repeatedly sank, so that by the time he had arrived on the Essex side of the river, his clothes were completely saturated with water. There was no time for consideration or refreshment, even if his finances had allowed him the opportunity of resorting to any public-house in the neighbourhood. The manager awaited him; the Braintree audience (like metropolitan and other audiences) were not to be cheated

out of their due respect. The little swimmer, therefore, after a few unsuccessful struggles, forced his limbs into his dripping clothes, and set forward stoutly for Braintree. He arrived there, wet, hungry, and worn out with fatigue; performed (or rather attempted to perform) Rolla, and—fainted away upon the stage! The consequences of this day's labour were a fever and ague, which kept him in his bed for some considerable time, and finally left him as penniless as when he crossed the unrelenting Thames; and richer in nothing, save in the power of telling, in after years, the watery adventure which we have here ventured to put upon record.

(1806). The year 1806 brought him once more to London. He obtained, through the medium of Miss Tidswell, an engagement to play "small parts" at the Haymarket Theatre. At this time his old acquaintance Rae was the principal tragedian there; and

the reader is requested to observe (if possible, without smiling) the relative stations which the two players then occupied in the drama.

Everybody knows "The Iron Chest." It is notorious that there is only one part in it worth playing, namely, that of Sir Edward Mortimer. There are, indeed, some second-rate characters—such as Wilford, Adam Winterton, Sampson Rawbold, Blanche, and Helen; but the rest are parts to be walked over, or played by "amateurs" (we can go no lower)—a certain mob of names or references, in which candle-snuffers and persons of similar occupation now and then condescend to show themselves, to the prejudice of the general brilliancy of the theatre. In this drama, Rae—the mouthing, ranting, inefficient Rae—played the *only* part, Sir Edward Mortimer; and Kean was thought worthy to represent—PETER! In "John Bull," our hero gave substance to the cha-

racter of SIMON, "*nominis umbra*," in which he had a satisfactory opportunity of doing nothing; whilst his cotemporaries, Fawcett, De Camp, Mrs. Glover, and Mrs. Gibbs, did all the real work of the comedy. In "Ways and Means" he played *Carney* (we have alluded to this already). In "Mrs. Wiggins" he played *the Waiter!* In "The Prisoner at large" he was *the Landlord!* In "The Heir at Law" he was *John, servant to Lord Duberley!* In "She would and she would not" he was *an Alguazil;* and in "Speed the Plough" he was—what?—the FIDDLER!! Whilst Rae, whose star was then in the ascendant, played *Hamlet*, Kean enacted ROSENCRANTZ! When Rae was *Count Almaviva*, Kean was again AN ALGUAZIL!! And when Rae, in "The Battle of Hexham," played *Gondibert* (beyond comparison the principal part), Kean was a—FIFER!!! Does not Fortune shuffle our cards in a curious

and inexplicable way? Seven or eight years afterwards—but we shall come to that presently. In the meantime, let us follow the course of time.

(1807). "In 1807," to use Mr. Jerrold's words once more (we cannot do better than quote them), "Mr. Kean again appeared at Sheerness: salary one guinea per week. He opened in *Alexander the Great.* An officer in one of the stage boxes annoyed him by frequently exclaiming—'Alexander *the little.*' At length, making use of his (even then) impressive and peculiar powers, Mr. Kean folded his arms, and approached the intruder, who again sneeringly repeated—'Alexander the Little,' and with a vehemence of manner and a glaring look, that appalled the offender, retorted 'Yes,—with a GREAT SOUL!' In the farce of the 'Young Hussar,' which followed, one of the actresses fainted, in consequence of the powerful acting

of Mr. Kean. He continued at that time, and even in such a place, to increase in favour, and was very generally followed, when, at the commencement of 1808, in consequence of some misunderstanding with one of the townspeople, he was compelled to seek the protection of a magistrate from a press-gang employed to take him. Having played four nights, the extent of time guaranteed by the magistrate (Mr. Shrove, of Queenborough), Mr. Kean made his escape, with some difficulty, on board the Chatham boat, having lain *perdu* in various places, until a nocturnal hour of sailing."—We thank the gods (not "amiss," we hope) that he escaped the fangs of the man-hunters.

In this, his second engagement with the Sheerness company, Kean appears to have been willing as well as able to "turn his hand to any thing." Observe what a versatile Alexander the Great the company possessed.

Mr. Jerrold is continuing his narrative,—"The models of the tricks for the pantomime of 'Mother Goose,' as played at Sheerness, were made by Mr. Kean, out of matches, pins, and paper. He also furnished a programme of business and notes, showing how many of the difficulties might be avoided for so small an establishment as that of Sheerness. In allusion to the trick of "the odd fish," in particular, he writes—"If you do not think it worth while to go to the expense of a dress, if the Harlequin be clever, he may jump into the sea, and restore the egg."

There is not much to admire, probably, in this variety of labour, except the extreme activity of the mind which induced it. Kean's talent was of the true sort; it was neither exclusive nor penurious. He could afford to waste it upon trifles; he could shift its aspect, and still show that it was bright. In the consciousness of his intellectual wealth,

—in the vigour and activity of his spirit, he did things from which a less gifted person would have recoiled. It is an unfailing sign of poverty, when a man below his zenith is perpetually cavilling and standing upon his petty rights and imaginary dignities; and it is equally a test of genius (which implies abundance) to forget these unimportant privileges; to show itself upon all occasions; to give forth its high qualities without stint or measure; conscious that nothing except meanness can degrade it, and that the spring from which it flows can never be exhausted.

CHAPTER IV.

ENTERS BEVERLEY'S COMPANY—A BLANK BENEFIT—HIS INTRODUCTION TO MISS CHAMBERS—DIGRESSION (ELLISTONIANA)—REFUSES TO ACT WITH MASTER BETTY—RUNS AWAY—HIS COURTSHIP—AND MARRIAGE.

(1808.) In March, 1808, Kean arrived at Gloucester, accompanied by a friend, without any theatrical engagements on his hands, but calculating probably on finding some provincial company either there or in the neighbourhood. He was not mistaken; for Beverley's company of actors were in the town, and Kean was shortly enrolled amongst them. Beverley and his wife,—the first a clever representative of Yorkshire and other rustics, and the lady a heroine of formidable proportions,—led the troop. There was also

amongst them Mr. Hughes ("Jack Hughes," as he is or was termed by his familiars), who now figures on the London boards.

The success of this company was not eminent. The respectable people of Gloucester are either below or above that pitch of refinement when good acting is sought after; or else (the alternative is inevitable) Mr. Beverley and his comedians were bad in the positive degree. They produced no money; the office of treasurer became a sinecure. The theatrical chest, that grand reservoir for provincial shillings and sixpences, was a mere "exhausted receiver," —an ugly, ghostly, empty memento of the silver age, which seemed to have fled away for ever. The manager's Saturday-night arithmetic was an incumbrance to him; he could draw nothing but imaginary balances, and take credit only for good intentions. In this hungry season, when there

was a failure of the general harvest, it occurred to the sufferers that something might still be forced, perhaps, out of the usual course; at all events, it was necessary to make the experiment. Two of them therefore resolved to take a benefit: Kean and Jack Hughes were the adventurers They put up "Cure the Heart-Ache" (a play implying hope, at least), and Kean was to enact *Young Rapid.* The bills were printed and distributed with more than ordinary diligence; the doors were unclosed, the lamps lighted, the curtain drawn up, when, behold!—in boxes, pit, and gallery, there appeared the staggering sum of *one shilling and sixpence* in hard cash! A privy council was held; and it was resolved to extinguish the lights with all possible speed, and not to "waste the midnight oil" for the gratification of their two spectators. Kean and Hughes therefore came forward, hand

in hand, bowed in dumb show, and retired. The whole of the evening's performance was condensed into this pantomime; except that they afterwards (very reluctantly) returned their visiters the eighteen pence that lay at the bottom of the money-taker's box. That night, as parliamentary reporters say, there was "no house." It is tolerably clear that there was no "Cure for the *Heart*-ache."

The reader is now approaching a serious event in our hero's life, namely—his marriage. His first introduction to Miss Chambers, afterwards his wife, was at Gloucester. She was then an amateur performer (a performer receiving no pay) in Beverley's company. She was standing on the stage, ready to rehearse the part of *Mrs. Mortimer*, in the comedy of "Laugh when you can," when Kean, who was to play SAMBO, the Black, stepped forward. Inquiring who "that shabby little man with such brilliant eyes"

was, she was told that his name was Kean; the manager adding, at the same time, with superfluous civility—"he is very clever."

We are sorry to say, that Sambo that night acquitted himself very indifferently. He did not know a syllable of his part. He plunged and floundered amongst the sentences, casting up such a foam of words as bewildered every body. He was never right, even by accident. He not only spoiled the part of Sambo, but that of Mrs. Mortimer also. So effectively bad was he, that Miss Chambers's discontent made itself manifest in reproaches. "It is very shameful, Sir," said she, "that you should come upon the stage and not know a word of your part. You have quite spoiled my play." The incorrigible Sambo turned on his heel without replying; but went up to the manager, and asked with an emphasis, "Who the *devil* is that?"

The extempore method of playing which Kean employed in this representation of Sambo, recalls to our mind a story which we heard some years ago, from another Roscius, the *American* Roscius—Mr. John Howard Payne. We hope that it will not seem out of place here.

The late Robert William Elliston (when will that rich book, '*Ellistoniana*,' be published?) was, at one period of his curious life, manager of two—we believe the Manchester and Birmingham—theatres. Being in London, he was, as a matter of course, beating up for recruits. To get the best actors at the smallest possible sums, was the supreme object of his wishes. He bargained—failed—succeeded—and underwent all the chances of a collector of rarities. Amongst other persons, he encountered Payne. He was overjoyed to see him. To inquire into his health, to state his own exigencies, and to give him a pressing invitation to

Manchester, was the work of a moment. "My dear fellow, come down to us! see us! hear us! mark us! observe—a—how we '*do* the thing' at our good theatre of Manchester—ha, ha!" Payne answered and said, that having nothing to do, he would very willingly run down to his country theatre, but protested against playing himself. "I have forgotten all my old characters now," said he, "so that playing is out of the question. However, I shall be happy to come down and see you." The manager reiterated his pressing invitations, and Payne accordingly "run down" to Manchester. Arriving at night, he beheld Elliston in his glory. He was the first man of the place. He managed, acted, directed, corrected every body. His theatre was the best theatre in the universe, and he was the best man in it. On the morning following, there was a rehearsal of "Richard the Third." Elliston

(amongst other sins) at that time used to murder our third Richard. This morning however, ("being busy," as he said), he invited Payne to rehearse for him. "Perhaps you will *play* Richard, too?" said he, in that drawling, chuckling tone of comedy, which so much became him. Payne assured him that this was totally out of the question; but that, as he (Elliston) was busy, he would try, with the prompter's help—who was requested to be loud enough—to blunder through the mere rehearsal. He began—

> "To day the winter of our discontent
> Is made—made—"

The prompter came in—"Is made new summer"—

> "Is made new summer by the sun of York,
> And all the storms that lowered upon our house,
> Are"—gone—vanished—hidden——what is it?

The true prompter came in again, and again, and again; but to no good purpose. The

head of the American Roscius held many clever things, but unluckily the part of Richard the Third was not amongst them. He, therefore, resolved to put an end to the absurdity, and turned round to address Elliston with—"You see it is utterly hopeless for me"—when he found that the manager was not there. He had gone, with a promise to return directly. Under these circumstances, poor Payne toiled through the play, and at the conclusion, seeing Elliston at his elbow once more, he addressed him with, "You perceive how utterly ridiculous it would have been, had I accepted your invitation to *play* the part. I have not been able to remember three consecutive lines!" The manager's face expanded: he swore that he was horribly amazed. "My dear fellow, you are not in earnest? I'm *sure* you are not. You are all over the town by this time, —in large letters—"*For this night only, the part of* RICHARD *by*—THE CELEBRATED

AMERICAN ROSCIUS, MR. JOHN HOWARD PAYNE. You *must* play for us to-night." —"It is totally impossible," replied Payne, angrily, "I cannot, and will not expose myself. What could possess you to do this, when you saw——?"—"My dear fellow, I saw you going on with the part, as I thought, excellently—swimmingly—*triumphantly.* Come, come! the thing is done: 'tis too late to undo it; play you *must*—nay, you *shall.* What! not oblige an old *friend* —an old *admirer?*" &c. &c. What could be done? men haven't hearts of stone! The exigency was great, and Payne consented. "And how did you get through the part?" said we to him, when he had told the story. "Why really better than I could have imagined. I studied all day, and at night gave as much of the part as I could recollect."—"But when you could not recollect?" persisted we. "Why," said he, "I spouted something *like* Shakspeare (!) and, to tell

you the truth, the people seemed to think my imitation better than the original; for I roared it out twice as loud as the legitimate text, and it drew down thunders of applause." —It was after this fashion, we presume, that the oblivious Sambo recited "something like" the text of *his* author; not, however, with such fortunate effect.

Return we now to our history.

On the second night of Miss Chambers and Kean acting together, "John Bull" was the play performed. The gentleman was *Job Thornberry*, and the lady was *Mary*. But what a change of circumstances! Mr. Thornberry was perfect, whilst the gentle Mary rivalled the forgetfulness of Sambo. It is to the honour of our hero, that he did not retort his fair antagonist's reproaches, but received her apologies (which were profuse), after the play was over, with "superior smiles" and infinite good humour.

Kean's performance of Thornberry was so good on this occasion, that Watson, a veteran actor, and proprietor of the Gloucester Theatre, (for it was hired only by Beverley's company for a short period), asked—"Who's that young man who played Job Thornberry? He's a capital actor, and some day or other he'll be a great man."

Good acting, however, was not sufficient to entice Gloucester audiences. In order, therefore, to effect this, and to renovate their still shattered finances, Beverley resolved to get up for representation "Tekeli" and "Mother Goose." In the preparation of these things, Kean was the master spirit. He was the director of the whole corps. He taught them to fight—to march—to dance—and, in short, the whole dumb show. He attended at Miss Chambers's lodging (the manager wishing her to attempt the part of Columbine) and instructed her in all the pan-

tomimic evolutions. And, to consummate all, he himself filled the two principal parts of *Tekeli* and *Harlequin!* His dance in "Mother Goose," with Beverley (the clown), stirred even the people of Gloucester into a ferment of admiration. And in "Tekeli," the combat, invented by our hero, was, according to all account, a fine, and even marvellous exhibition. To use the words of an eye-witness—"The fight in Tekeli was splendid. It called down thunders of applause. The effect is even now quite fresh in my mind. I never saw anything like it." The reader who remembers the grace and energy of Kean, in the encounters of Richard and Macbeth, will easily believe in the gladiatorial excellence of Tekeli.

In this manner about three months passed away, at the expiration of which time, the company prepared to move to Stroud. As to Kean and Miss Chambers, they privately

agreed to perform together in the very serious drama called "Matrimony." *He* was captivated by her liveliness, and *she* forgot his first "shabby" appearance at the rehearsal, in the lustre of his eyes, and in the daily contemplation of his genius.

At Stroud, he continued to lead in every department. Amongst other things, he played *Archer*, in the "Beaux Stratagem," indifferently (not knowing half of his part), and *Lord Hastings*, in "Jane Shore," very finely. His salary here was a guinea a-week. The people of Stroud, it seems, preferred farces and pantomimes to either comedies or tragedies; but their preference was free from any indiscretion—never amounting to enthusiasm, and (what was worse) never by any chance filling the theatre. The house itself was small, holding about £30 at the utmost; and at this period the receipts averaged from £7 to £10 per night. Beverley could barely

pay his hungry company. He wished to do more; and therefore wrote to London, and invited Master Betty, then just risen into notice, to come and make known his merits to the critics of Stroud, in Gloucestershire.

Betty accepted the invitation, came down accordingly, and was speedily proclaimed in as large type as the Stroud printer could furnish. "Douglas" and "Hamlet" were the two first tragedies in which he was to appear, and the announcements ran thus—*Norval*, Master Betty—*Glenalvon*, Mr. Kean—*Lady Randolph*, Miss Chambers; and *Hamlet*, Master Betty—*Laertes*, Mr. Kean. This announcement suited Master Betty very well; but it did not suit the little man who was required to play second to him. *His* mind was very speedily made up upon the subject. He did not indeed make any ostentatious display of his intentions; but he was not the less thoroughly determined to

slip quietly out of the whole affair, and leave Messrs. Betty and Beverley to fight through Douglas and Hamlet by themselves in the best way that they could. Having come to this resolution, he was not the man to break it. He set off, unknown to any one, boiling over with indignation at the supposed insult offered to him, and for three days and two nights the answer to all inquiries was the same—"He is not to be found!" The affairs of the theatre were injured; the manager was angry; and some people were alarmed. Thoughts were even entertained of dragging the ponds of the neighbourhood, for the body of the lost Laertes. On the third day, Miss Chambers, who began to be very uneasy at his prolonged absence, determined to make one more attempt to recover her estray. She accordingly despatched another messenger (several had been sent out already in vain) with directions to scour the country, and to bring him in at all

events, dead or alive. The man had not far to proceed; for after walking a mile or thereabouts, on the road towards—we forget what place—he encountered the truant tragedian returning homewards, in dismal plight, but seemingly in as high dudgeon as ever. He walked straight to Miss Chambers's house, and, to her inquiry of—"Mr. Kean, where *have* you been?" replied, "In the fields—in the woods. I am starved. I have eaten nothing—nothing but turnips and cabbages, since I've been out; but I'll go again, to-morrow—and again—and as often as I see myself put up in such characters." And he concluded this speech by saying (or swearing) that he would not "play second to any man living, except to John Kemble."

Life, however, was not all made up of these uneven places. There were some calm, Elysian moments, in which he had leisure to make

love. He would go (in the evening, generally) to Miss Chambers's house, and,—besides the innumerable tender things which their peculiar situation demanded (we presume thus much),—he amused himself and his affianced, by mimicking John Kemble and various performers, and by singing after the manner of Kelly, Incledon, and Braham, and other famous vocalists. In the presence of his one auditor, his success was, no doubt (to use the language of the bills), "unprecedented!" He studied, however, in the midst of all this devotion; and when any great character required his attention, he threw his whole thoughts into it. The account we have received (and we can rely upon it) is—"He used to mope about for hours, walking miles and miles alone, with his hands in his pockets, thinking intensely on his characters. No one could get a word from him. He

studied and *slaved* beyond any actor I ever knew." Is not this the key, to show how it was that he excelled, as he did, in the wonderful characters of Shakspeare?

July, 1808.—But let us conclude this part of our biography. Master Betty did not draw the houses which were expected. Beverley's company, therefore, broke up, and Kean, Miss Chambers, and others, went to play with Watson's company at Cheltenham. Here they played *without pay*, Kean enacting Octavian and other characters, until (for it seems to have been a state of probation) the admiration that his performances excited gave him an irresistible claim upon Watson's treasury. We understand that it was about a fortnight after the migration of Kean from Stroud to Cheltenham, that he and Miss Chambers set off one fine morning for the former place, in a returned postchaise. They

were, accompanied by Miss Chambers's sister, and by a Mr. White (a friend of Kean) and before they returned to Cheltenham, which they did on the same day, Edmund Kean and Maria Chambers were—man and wife.

CHAPTER V.

ACTS AT CHELTENHAM—AT WARWICK—AT WALSALL—JOINS THE BIRMINGHAM COMPANY—STEPHEN KEMBLE—OUR HERO ATTACKS THE MAIL COACH—JOURNEY ON FOOT FROM BIRMINGHAM TO SWANSEA.

KEAN, raised by the magic of the Rev. Mr. ———'s words, from his degree of bachelor to that of "Kean the married man," came back with his young wife to Cheltenham to seek a fresh engagement. Beverley, the manager, was there, and was about to make terms with the supposed Miss Chambers, when the fact of the marriage becoming known, he frowned upon the nuptials so lately celebrated, and abandoned her and her husband altogether, saying that he would have "nothing to do with either of them."

After a short time spent at Cheltenham, therefore, Mr. and Mrs. Kean proceeded to Warwick, where the husband obtained an engagement, and received a guinea per week for his services. He produced very little effect there, and in fact played but few parts of note; the principal characters (especially in comedy, the best-beloved) being occupied by a certain large, tall, light-haired Mr. Waring, who appropriated most of the applause to himself. Mr. Chatterley also was a great man in this company, and Mr. Mason (was he not a relation of Mrs. Siddons?) was a tolerably great man; but Kean was esteemed a person of no account. Upon one occasion, indeed, he played *Lothaire*, in Monk Lewis's tragedy of Adelgitha, to Chatterley's Guiscard (the real hero) and Mason's Michael Ducas; but in general he was unemployed and dissatisfied. He very willingly therefore took his departure for Walsall, where he

arrived in the month of September, entered Watson's company, and commenced his career in his since celebrated character of Richard the Third. At this small place he took a benefit, and cleared about twelve pounds by it. He thought the sum a fortune, and with it in his pocket he, in October, 1808, quitted Walsall, and, full of high anticipations, proceeded to Birmingham.

Birmingham contains a large and respectable theatre, and here Mr. and Mrs. Kean stayed full four months, *each* of them at a guinea a week salary. They were still in Watson's company, which however was now enlarged. He reckoned amongst his leaders the aforesaid Mr. (and also a Mrs.) Chatterley, Mr. and Mrs. Waring (the lady with a voice like a giant's), Mr. Vandenhoff, then passing by the name of Villars, and others. They got on pretty well till March, 1809, when the company set out for Lich-

field, at which place they remained six or seven weeks, without accomplishing anything that is worthy of mention. On their return to Birmingham in May, they found that Stephen Kemble had been engaged to come and shine amongst them, "as a *star!*" This gentleman played Falstaff, tolerably,—Lear, in which his handsome face told more in his favour than his acting,—and also Richard the Third, in which he involved himself in an unforeseen dilemma. For, after having knelt to Lady Anne for her love (our friend was fat!) he found himself fixed to the floor by dint of his own gravitation. In this dilemma, he was compelled to lay aside the tyrant, and sue to his victim for help. Our informant remembers hearing him say, "Help me up! help me up!" in tones painfully energetic. Kean himself went into the front of the house to see the great Stephen *fill* this character, and roared at the exhibition.

When Stephen Kemble acted Lear, Kean played the part of *Edgar* respectably—a little more perhaps; and when Stephen was Falstaff, Kean topped the part of *Hotspur*, with such spirit and effect, that Stephen said to him, "You have played the character of Hotspur, sir, as well as Mr. John Kemble." And he afterwards asserted, in the fulness of his satisfaction, that Henry the Fourth was better played in Birmingham than in London, "even with my brother John in it." Kean was in rapture at these compliments, as may well be imagined; and upon the strength of them, he made an advance, and endeavoured to get into Stephen's company. He failed, however, being either too bad or too *good*, (or from some other cause unknown to us,) and was compelled to continue at Birmingham. Here he went on playing his endless variety of parts; sometimes patiently enough, but at others breaking out into bitter

execrations at his own ill-fortune, and at the success of others who passed him in the road to fame. He was not without the actor's solace—applause, however. He forced the people of Birmingham to yield up their tribute of admiration to him in some of his characters. In *Octavian*, in the Mountaineers, more particularly, they admitted that he was '*better than Elliston!*' Lest the reader should smile at the compliment, we think it necessary to inform him that Elliston was in those days a great tragedian—in Birmingham.

About this time, the salary of our hero was raised temporarily from a guinea to thirty shillings a week, on condition of his acting Harlequin, in addition to his usual work. His expenses however were with difficulty kept down, and in the end they exceeded his income. Nevertheless, he became better known, and was not without temptations to

play in various provincial theatres. Amongst others, he received an invitation from a little stuttering man, who was manager of a small theatre near Birmingham. This person requested him to specify his line of parts. Kean replied, "Richard, Othello, Hamlet," &c. The little manager would not hear of it. "If John Kemble came down," said he, "he should not have them. *They are mine!*" "What do you think of the impudence of this fellow?" said Kean to his wife; "he wants *me* to play second parts,—and *to him!*" She tried to quiet him, but his blood was on the ferment, and he threatened the ambitious manager in terms that left no doubt of his intentions to inflict memorable punishment upon him. He even set out with the intention of finding him, but failing, and having in the course of his expedition stopped at some alluring alehouse (to refresh his indignation), he attacked a mail coach which was

stopping to change horses, seized the leaders by their heads, and after a magnificent struggle was duly lodged in the hands of "the guardian of the night." This fellow, who sympathised with a man "in drink," instead of giving him into the cold custody of the watchhouse, coaxed him homewards, and finally delivered him safely at his lodgings, into the care of his expecting landlady. The landlady tried the same method of treatment that the watchman had adopted with such success; but whether Kean had had enough of sweets already or not, he resented them now with becoming spirit, and not finding that she abandoned her importunities, he concluded by taking up his tormentor (a large heavy woman, of we know not how many stone) in his arms, and endeavoured to throw her out of her own window. We rejoice to say that the lady escaped, either by virtue of her own weight, or the

weight of Mrs. Kean's arguments; and the tragedian was induced at last, through the entreaties of his wife, to go quietly to bed and forget himself till morning.

Kean had now been a long time at Birmingham, when, anxious to better his bad fortune, he listened to overtures from Cherry, the manager of the Swansea theatre, and finally accepted an engagement to lead the business there, at five-and-twenty shillings a-week. Having arranged the terms, there remained only one difficulty, and that was how to get to Swansea. Kean and his wife (now near her accouchement, and, consequently, unfit to encounter much fatigue) had about one hundred and fifty miles to travel, and their fortune was—to use a phrase rather expressive than classical—considerably worse than nothing. In short, they were fifteen pounds in debt, and had not sixpence in their pockets. Kean's

invention was at the ebb. He thought of pledging some superfluities. Alas, there were none! His theatrical friends? They were as poor as he. What was to be done? In such dilemmas the woman's wit is always foremost. His wife stepped in to his relief. She proposed that he should state his difficulty to Cherry, and request a few pounds in advance. This is not an unusual thing with country performers, a small sum being often advanced, and afterwards deducted, by weekly instalments, from their salaries. Kean therefore wrote to Cherry, and received from him —two pounds! With this sum he could not of course pay all his debts; but a week's lodging then due, amounting to ten shillings, and some other trifling debts, were *necessarily* to be discharged; these paid, the tragedian and his wife found that they had not quite twenty shillings in their purse, and the whole long and unknown road to Swansea before them.

They set out. It was four o'clock on a fine July morning, when they shook the dust of Birmingham from their feet, and commenced their journey *on foot* towards Bristol. Their poverty compelled them to be thus early risers; for creditors at Birmingham, like those in other places, have quick eyes and "flinty hearts." They walked slowly (for Mrs. Kean was now very infirm), and arranged that they should travel about ten or twelve miles a-day, if possible. Kean, dressed in blue from head to foot, with his dark sharp resolute face, a black stock, and four swords over his shoulder (suspending the family bundle of clothes,) looked like a poor little navy lieutenant, whom the wars had left on half-pay and penniless, trudging on, with his wife, to his native village. This resemblance (for it is not an imagination of ours) procured them from time to time some little attentions, and always commanded

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respect. After walking a few miles, they sat down by the way-side to rest. Kean, perceiving a small river near the spot, delivered up the swords and bundle to his wife, and, after finding a convenient place, plunged in the water, and swam about for a few minutes. This, with the exception of a single meal, was all the refreshment they had till the evening, when they found themselves at a village about twelve miles from Birmingham. A very humble supper and a cheap bed concluded the day. The following days, the

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow"

passed in the same fatiguing and cheerless manner. They did not meet with an adventure. All that they particularly noted was, that the space between themselves and Bristol narrowed very slowly, and that their money was rapidly diminishing.

At last they arrived at Bristol, without a penny. They chose a small public house to put up at, "The Mulberry-tree," and entered into an anxious consultation as to their "ways and means;" the result of which was that Kean determined to write to Cherry for a second advance. It may easily be imagined that the interval between their letter and Cherry's reply was passed uncomfortably enough; but there was no help for it. They had walked a hundred miles, and they had still eighty more to travel, before they could reach Swansea. It was impossible to accomplish this without money, and to raise money upon the little articles of dress which they had with them was equally past hope; for they had none to spare. Even the swords (and they were not of Damascus) would be required when they arrived at Swansea, for the immediate business of the theatre; and there was nothing else which the harshest

scrutiny could have pronounced superfluous. After four or five days' expectation, however, Cherry's letter arrived. It enclosed two pounds more. Out of this sum they paid their five days' bill at "The Mulberry Tree," amounting to twenty-five shillings, and with the remaining fifteen, started on the same evening for Swansea.

It was not long before they came-to at a small knot of houses by the river Avon, (could this have been Clifton Hot-wells?) when going into a public house for the purpose of taking tea, they found that a boat, bound to Newport, was likely to pass in the course of the evening. They comforted themselves with the tea, and afterwards wore away the time by walking to and fro by the side of the river, watching for the Newport boat. This occupied them till ten o'clock. At that hour, a little vessel, laden with hemp and tar, and other things infinitely more

useful than fragrant, arrived. It was dark, and the master (or captain) of the vessel was not inclined to stop for the sake of two poor players. However, Kean's rhetoric prevailed in the end, and the man agreed to take them, for five shillings, to Newport. They embarked. The boat was very small, as we have said; it was, moreover, completely occupied by its load, and gave out from every part a detestable odour. There was no bed in it, nor refreshment of any kind. Mrs. Kean, who was in great and increasing pain, and apprehensive, in fact, of a sudden confinement, lay down upon a coil of ropes, but was unable to sleep. Kean himself walked the deck all night with the master of the boat, mistaken no longer, we apprehend, for a naval officer; for the salt-water wits very speedily make out to which element a passenger belongs. Thus they sailed on steadily, but slowly; and at nine

in the morning the vessel swung into Newport, and discharged its theatrical cargo.

After breakfasting at Newport, where they found a "kind landlady" and clean quarters, they proceeded on foot to Cardiff. Here Mrs. Kean appeared so overcome by pain that her husband wished her to remain. She refused, however, with the pertinacity common, we are sorry to say, to the sex, and after dinner, (which consisted—the reader may be curious?—of cold salt beef,) the travellers set forward again. They walked from six o'clock in the evening till one in the morning, when they arrived, half dead with fatigue, at Cowbridge. To add to their distress, the public-house at this place was shut up, and all sober people were in bed. Kean announced his arrival by striking, with his four swords, at the inn door. Whether this had too military an effect, and sounded like

a summons to surrender, we do not know; but the landlady seemed reluctant to give an answer. At last, after repeated applications to the door, she came down, and inquired, *in Welsh*, who were there. Kean, in authoritative English, cried—"Open the door!" The woman retorted in Welsh, and appearances altogether seemed to favour the idea that the travellers would for that night sleep under no canopy save that of Canopus. Better things turned out, however. The landlady relented into English, and eventually showed herself worthy of belonging to that respectable country, whose antiquity is so strongly insisted on; and whose origin, in fact, appears to have been forgotten, even in the times when, according to the histories of the Chinese and the Jews, the foundations of the earth were laid. Nothing, in short, could be more kind than she was. She exerted herself in all ways; helping the lady into a comfortable bed, and placing a large piece of cold

meat and an ample jug of cider before our hero, who, it is but justice to say, did superlative honour to his Welsh entertainment.

Another morning rose upon our travellers. They arose, too, with the morning, and once more set forwards towards the odious Swansea, whose distance seemed to remain still perversely the same, like that of the never-ending horizon. Without breakfast, which their reduced finances would not now allow them to take, it may be supposed that they did not proceed very merrily. "Time and the hour," however, brought them, a little before midday, to a village school-house, where the mistress (happy in the absence of her scholars) supplied them with breakfast, and refused to take any money in return. It is not our business at present to pry into the small secrets of the human heart; otherwise, it might not be disadvantageous to inquire how much of this good school-mistress's

benevolence resulted from her that day's happy temperament. A key to the riddle would supply a system for the improvement of mankind, that could not too soon be entered upon. We ourselves cannot at present enter upon the subject. We are, indeed, well inclined to be philosophical, but we must refrain, seeing that some of our contemporaries occasionally muddy the stream of their narrative by profound paradoxes, and impenetrable observations on men and things. We must proceed and complete the Swansea journey, already, we fear, too long. Kean, revived by the school-mistress's fare, trudged on with renewed spirits. We know not what feat or combat (in Tekeli or Richard) he might have been meditating, when suddenly a man jumped out of the hedge, and asked peremptorily—"Is that your wife?" This is sometimes a very awkward question. It was not so in the present instance, indeed; notwith-

standing which, our hero declined a reply. His silence nourished the rogue's courage, who went on another length—"If she's *not*," said he, roughly, "she must come with me." The blood of Mrs. Kean, at this intimation, fell down to Zero; but the blood of the tragedian mounted. He unslung his bundle of swords, and taking one (it was his "Richard sword,") he unsheathed it in an instant, and was about to try its metal upon his new acquaintance, when that personage started off, and made his way over hedge and ditch, with an expedition that we had supposed to belong only to experienced London debtors living on their wits, when they know that a tipstaff with a fatal touch is coming swiftly in their wake. The man escaped, and Mrs. Kean and her champion walked wearily on till they reached the sands, which are about five miles distant from Swansea. At this place, Kean endea-

voured to obtain from the occupier of a cottage, a little milk for his wife, who was sinking with fatigue. The churl refused. Kean tendered the few halfpence that he possessed, but these were rejected. He therefore collected some water for her in his hat, and thus humbly refreshed, the poor pair continued to struggle on till evening, when they, at last, set foot in the almost unattainable Swansea! The cold boiled leg of mutton and cider which they that evening sate down before, in the boat house, and ate with an appetite surpassed only by those who were shut up in the Tower of Famine, existed like a splendid and happy vision in their memories for more than twenty years.

We have extended the account of this journey somewhat beyond what we originally intended, in order that "all our young readers" (as good Mr. Newberry's books say—or used to say) may see how one of the high

and crowned kings of tragedy was accustomed to travel; before they resolve irrevocably to enrol themselves under those ragged and tawdry colours which float above the English Drama—a sign and prophecy of the player's fortunes!

CHAPTER VI.

IN CHERRY'S COMPANY—PLAYS EDGAR—PROCEEDS TO CARMARTHEN — TO HAVERFORDWEST — TO WATERFORD, IRELAND—MOTHER GOOSE—A YOUNG RECRUIT—MR. GRATTAN'S REMINISCENCES—HOLY-DAY OCCUPATIONS—A REAL MONKEY.

ONCE at Swansea, Kean lost no time in announcing his arrival to Cherry, the manager. The next step was to procure lodgings, which, after some inquiry, he obtained for the sum of eight shillings a week. They consisted of a little tiled parlour and a bedroom; very humble, but clean and quiet. The luxury of rest, after such extreme fatigue as our actor and his wife had undergone, was inexpressibly delightful. They enjoyed it for a day or two, and not a little

happy were they at night, when they lay down to dream (the one of quiet comforts, the other of fame and golden fortune) that the next day they were not compelled to rise with the sun, and toil on, hungry and foot-sore, until evening.

At his first interview with our hero, Cherry's manner was rather stiff. He seemed to think that Kean ought to have intrusted all his difficulties to him, before he entered into the engagement; and he was, reasonably enough, averse to the system of advancing money upon the speculation of an actor's attractive qualities. The cold air of the manager, however, (for he was a good kind of man), soon wore off, and he put up Kean in *Rolla*. Mrs. Cherry, the manager's wife, was Elvira; and Cora, the virgin of the sun, was played by Mrs. Kean, who was within one month of her confinement. The company consisted of the manager, his wife

and daughter (Miss played the heroines), a Mrs. Gunning, and Mr. Woulds, now manager of Swansea. This last named gentleman was a very respectable comedian, and acted in the styles of Liston and Jack Bannister. Kean himself, who was now repaying by five shillings a week his debt to Cherry, performed the leading parts in secondary tragedy, in genteel comedy, and in pantomime. He played *Rolla, Reuben Glenroy, Daran* in "The Exile," &c., and was upon the whole the pillar and glory of the house of Swansea, until the Bath theatre closed, and then—Bengough came! The reader who can remember that gentleman (he afterwards came to London, acted at Covent Garden, and finally, we believe, died manager of the Coburg theatre,) will smile to think that the splendour of his performances should have been sufficient to make pale the intense natural brilliancy of Kean. Yet so it was.

Bengough had a big person, a big voice, and a sort of swash-buckler manner, which was magnified by the misty imaginations of the people of Swansea into something actually and intellectually great. He accordingly took the lead, and went through the parts of Leon in "Rule a Wife and have a Wife," Duke Aranza, and others of that stamp, to the satisfaction of all present. He was even profane enough to attempt the personation of Othello and Lear. Indeed, he was for a time the sole "star" of this company; for Kean, during the other's ascendency, was left to repose. When he did act he endeavoured to act well, and he appears to have always understood his own powers. He would often, on returning from the theatre, assert that he had played finely, and complain that he could get no applause. "You will not find more than five persons in five hundred who understand acting," said he. "I am losing

my time here," he continued, "and I shall never be properly valued, unless I go and have a *fair* trial in London."

On the 13th of September, 1809, Kean's first child (a boy) was born. Three days afterwards Bengough took Lear for his benefit, and Kean good-naturedly agreed to play Edgar on the occasion. The character was not adapted to his particular powers; he topped the part, however, very cleverly, and showed brilliant points; but Bengough, on his "Atlantean shoulders," bore off the whole applause.

After staying about three months at Swansea, Kean and his wife went with Cherry's company to Carmarthen, from Carmarthen to Haverfordwest, and thence crossed over to Waterford, in Ireland. Before we set foot in Ireland, however, we must detain the reader for a moment. At Carmarthen—he will be good enough to go back to Carmarthen—the

manager was desirous of getting up, with the aid of Kean, the renowned pantomime of "Mother Goose." In this drama, one of the principal characters is the Goose itself. It does not demand genius indeed, but it requires that the actor who is to fill it should have made divers experiments in the art of self-suffocation, and have come off triumphant. If he die in the course of his education, it is clear that he will no longer be fit for the goose; but if he survive, his claims to an engagement appear to be irresistible. At Carmarthen there was no goose of experience; Mr. Cherry, not having had courage to bring forward the drama till Kean came to his aid, had not in his company any well-tempered little blade of a boy, who had figured in feathers. It was necessary therefore to look out for a performer. As luck would have it, the landlady of the house in which Kean and his

wife lodged, possessed the requisite urchin. He was small, and had sufficient of the natural goose in his composition not to disgrace the character. It was agreed, therefore, that he should make his debut without loss of time,—Salary (as Mr. Jerrold says) half-a-crown per night. Appearances were now very promising, the mother having signed the contract, and the boy being willing to act. It glanced across the mind of our hero, however, that as neither the boy nor his mother had ever beheld a play, it might be the safer plan to let the future goose see something of theatrical matters beforehand. He therefore stuck him in the orchestra amongst the musicians, and bade him look about him. The boy, wedged in between the fiddlers, whose elbows flew every instant within an inch of his head, and gazing on a set of painted players, who came swaggering forward to the lamps, clutching their daggers, and roaring out their

tremendous fustian full in his face, may be excused perhaps for suffering some alarm. At all events, he *did* suffer; and when the play was over (for till then he was hemmed in by his enemies), he started off at full speed homewards, threw himself, half out of his mind, into his mother's arms, and cried out, "Oh mother, mother, all the devils from hell have been grinning at me!" The mother, exulting in the untouched half-crown, endeavoured to soothe him; she remonstrated, she argued, she intreated; but in vain. The boy was resolute in abandoning his part; he cried, he struggled, he hid himself, and betrayed altogether such signs of terror, that his parents were obliged at last to rescind the horrible contract. We are happy to state that Mr. Cherry, the manager, whilst in this dilemma, was fortunately enabled to catch his youngest son, whom he thrust, *nolens volens*, into the goose, and thus the pantomime was at last made perfect.

Kean was the harlequin of the night, having previously acted Richard the Third. The exhaustion, occasioned by the performance of two such parts, can be understood only by actors. Even Kean, with his iron frame and prodigious energies, was incompetent to the task without some strong temporary excitement. This, such as it is, must be his excuse for many deviations from sobriety. From Carmarthen, Cherry and his company went to Haverfordwest, a small place, where Kean never became a favourite, ("he was not tall enough,") and from Haverfordwest they passed over, in the depth of winter, to Waterford, in Ireland.

(1809-10). The residence of Kean at Waterford (where the company remained four months) is chiefly memorable on account of his having formed an acquaintance there with two well-known men of letters. This is not the place to record the merits of those

gentlemen. We are now busy with the history of *Kean;* and the public will not expect to be treated in that history with the authors' notions of all the tragedian's friends. Under other circumstances, we should have had pleasure in showing that we are, like other judicious writers, properly sensible of the talents of two such eminent men as Mr. Grattan and Mr. Sheridan Knowles.

Mr. Grattan has, in The New Monthly Magazine, given a pleasant account of his first meeting with Kean. We shall venture to make the following extracts from it.

"I cannot," he commences, "recal exactly the year in which I happened to be stationed in the barracks of Waterford, in the south of Ireland, at that time the head quarters of the regiment in which I was a subaltern. The dates and data of those days have almost all slipped, sand-like, from one end of Time's glass; and it is hard to separate and arrange

them, as they lie confounded in the other. How difficult is it even to remember distinctly what were the pains and what the pleasures of youth! The very mixture of both, and the confusion in which they blended together, were perhaps the causes of their acuteness at the time, as they are of their vagueness now. But there is a certain pursuit, one of the minor enjoyments of life, which has, for me, always preserved its attraction intact. I mean the exercise of fencing. It was my attachment to it, that led to my personal knowledge of Kean.

"In the days I speak of, and long after, I never lost an opportunity of encountering amateurs and professors of 'the noble science of defence.' I frequently took up the foils with a little lieutenant of a troop of artillery, which formed part of the Waterford garrison, and few days passed without our measuring blades together.

"I was one evening walking with this brother idler on the public promenade called 'The *Mall*;' and, passing by the theatre, which had been within a day or two occupied by a strolling company, we looked at the play-bill, and found that the performances for that evening consisted of 'Hamlet,'—the principal character not left out by particular desire,—and some farce, the name and nature of which I forget. We voted the first four acts of the tragedy 'a bore,' but agreed to go in for half an hour, at the commencement of the celebrated fencing scene, between Hamlet and Laertes, just to see what sort of affair the strollers would make of it.

"In due time, the door-keeper, to whom we expressed our intention, and who was alive to the importance of two box-ticket takers, came to seek us in a neighbouring billiard-room.' He announced the opening of the

fifth act of the play, and we arrived in time to take possession of a very empty stage box."

Hamlet and Laertes, it appears, were in the act of encountering each other.

"We turned our attention," Mr. Grattan proceeds, "to the chief actors in the scene, who stood in position, and prepared for the assault.

"The young man who played Laertes was extremely handsome, and very tall; and a pair of high-heeled boots added so much to his natural stature, that the little pale, thin man, who represented Hamlet, appeared a mere pigmy beside him. Laertes commenced (after slurring, 'for better for worse,' through the usual salute,) to push carte and tierce, which might, as far as the scientific use of the small-sword was concerned, have been as correctly termed cart and horse.

"My companion, who had by no means a

poor opinion of his own skill, and who was rather unmerciful towards the awkwardness of others, laughed outright, and in a manner sufficient to disconcert even an adroit performer. He proposed to me to leave the place, calling out theatrically, 'Hold! enough!'—and I might have agreed, had I not thought I perceived in the Hamlet a quiet gracefulness of manner, while he parried the cut-and-thrust attacks of his adversary, as well as a quick glance of haughty resentment at the uncivil laugh by which they were noticed. When he began to return the lounges *secundum artem*, we were quite taken by surprise, to see the carriage and action of a practised swordsman; and, as he went through the whole performance, we were satisfied that we had, in the phrase of Osrick aforesaid, made

'A hit—a very palpable hit.'

"We immediately inquired of the woman

who filled the nearly sinecure place of money-taker, as to the gentleman whose 'excellence for his weapon' had so pleasantly surprised us. She told us that his name was Kean; that he was an actor of first-rate talent; chief tragic hero (for they were all honourable men) of the company; and also the principal singer, stage-manager, and getter-up of pantomimes, and one of the best harlequins in Wales or the west of England."

Mr. Grattan and his friend contrive to make acquaintance with Kean, who, it seems, taught fencing at this particular period. The impression which the tragedian made, was, it seems, very favourable.

"Nothing could exceed Kean's good conduct and unpresuming manners," says Mr. Grattan, "during some weeks that I knew him in this way. Several of the officers of the garrison met him with us on these occasions, and a strong interest was excited for

him. He owed to this cause, I believe, rather than to any just appreciation of his professional merit, a good benefit, and some private kindnesses. But, when I look back to that period, in which his talent was certainly as matured as in two or three years later, I cannot bring myself to believe that he played so well then as when he filled me with such delight on the boards of old Drury. A man of his vigorous genius required excitement to bring it into full play. His bold conceptions and original style must have wanted, even to himself, some stronger test than his own judgment, displayed as they were in the confined sphere of little country theatres. And all that has since been received with such enthusiasm, must then have been considered, at the best, as doubtful and obscure."

We do not quite come into this view of the subject. Kean played "his best," as he often declared, in the provinces; and he

played there, undoubtedly, without that dread of contemporary criticism, which, at the period of his London performances, must, we think, have materially affected his style. That criticism, when it was adverse, must (if it had any effect upon his acting) have impaired its energy; and when favourable, it could scarcely have given to it more spirit than it possessed in those early times, when, full of confidence in his own genius, he flung himself passionately into the part, and wrought out his daring and original conceptions, without apprehension either of critics or spectators.

Kean's occupations at Waterford were not confined to the theatre. Besides "moistening his clay" with the "dew" for which Ireland is so famous, (and he did this with great regularity), he occasionally enjoyed a holiday with some friends. These friends, to say truth, were some gentlemen privates in the Irish militia, who loved tippling almost

as well as the tragedian. He drank with them, partook of their pastimes, (one of which was putting a skeleton in motion, and frightening people into fits), and went out with them, night after night, scouring the country in search of arms. He made acquaintance also with some of the disaffected Irish (they were "Croppies," if we remember rightly, in those days), and wished to become their leader! And, as a relaxation from these arduous duties and soaring thoughts, he wrote verses, chiefly on pastoral subjects, and composed music, after a fashion of his own. He was altogether ignorant of written music; but he played many tunes by ear, and it was not therefore very difficult for him, trying note after note on the instrument, to produce something like a regular air, and to adapt it to verse. In this way he set "Doubt that the stars are fire," and other small pieces of poetry.

Before quitting Ireland on this visit, he was fortunate enough to clear a considerable sum—almost 40*l.* by his benefit. This was owing in a great degree to the exertions of Mrs. Kean's friends, who resided in the neighbourhood. We should not have troubled the reader by telling him that Kean played *Douglas*, in Mrs. Hannah More's tragedy of "Percy," and also *the Monkey*, in the after-piece of "Perouse," on this occasion, had he not introduced the monkey into his private life. It is a fact, characteristic of the man, that he went home after the play, in his transformed state, and swore, *ore rotundo*, that he would remain thus all night; and he *did!* The remonstrances of his wife, who complained bitterly of the execrable odour arising from the undressed skins (the monkey costume), and from the paint and varnish that encrusted his face, were of no avail. His will was law; and she was driven there-

fore to take her repose on a sofa; whilst the human animal threw himself, skins, paint, varnish and all, into the bed, and remained there during the whole of his benefit night. This appears more than sufficiently wilful and unfeeling; and yet it was on this very night, according to Mr. Grattan, "and in this character," that "he showed agility scarcely surpassed by Mazurier or Gouffe, and touches of deep tragedy in the Monkey's death scene, which made the whole audience shed tears."

(1811). Kean remained in Cherry's company about two years, in the course of which time he went once more to Swansea, and afterwards made a second journey to Waterford. This occurred in the year following his first visit. His reception at Waterford on the second occasion was by no means encouraging. His wild way of life had become known. Debts pressed upon him;

difficulties surrounded him; and, to get rid of these, he gave an entertainment (songs and recitations) at the Assembly-house, which produced a trifle; sold some articles of dress, which yielded a little more; and thus slenderly equipped, he bade farewell to Ireland.

It was during his stay in Waterford, that his only surviving son, the present Mr. Charles Kean, was born.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. AND MRS. KNOWLES—HIS UNPUBLISHED PLAY OF LEO, OR THE GIPSY.

FIVE and twenty years ago, Mr. Knowles, the now well-known author of "Virginius" and "The Hunchback," was an obscure actor, or rather singer, at Waterford, in Ireland. He and his wife were at that time members of Cherry's company, and it was there that he first became acquainted with Kean. Knowles was even then an author, having, we believe, written various songs and small pieces of poetry. At all events he produced, at this period, a drama, in which Kean filled the principal part. It was called "LEO, or the GIPSY." Never having been published, it would now, if entire, have been an object of

considerable interest. It would have been curious to have seen how the most successful dramatic writer of the day entered upon his literary career. Unluckily, we are not able to show this satisfactorily. We have, indeed, a portion of the play—the three first acts, in our possession (with the permission of the author to print as much of it as we please); but the interest of a play increasing generally in the later acts, it would be unfair to receive our extracts as a true sample of what Mr. Knowles was, even at this time, capable of accomplishing. We forbear entering into any critical eulogiums upon such portions as we adopt in our pages, leaving that agreeable task to the "judicious reader."

LEO, *or* THE GIPSY.

The *dramatis personæ* consist of a certain *Sir Walter* (a Justice); *Ferdinand*, his supposed son; *Helen*, his niece; and a band of

gipsies, the principal of whom are *Leo* (who loves and is beloved by Helen); his friend *Hugo*, who loves the gipsy-girl Cloe, but is slighted by her for the sake of Ferdinand; and *Cloe* herself. The rest are the gipsy-king, and a set of fellows without mark, but having the significant titles of Long Jack, Merry Tom, Black Robin, &c. &c. &c.

After an introductory scene, wherein Sir Walter drives away one of the old gipsies, who is in the act of approximating to the pantry, Leo and his friend Hugo are seen. Cloe, the gipsy-girl, has, we suppose, just passed across with Ferdinand, when Leo calls to his companion—

Leo. Thou may'st advance.
Hugo. What's to be done? You see
She takes him towards the wood! My heart's on fire.
I mark'd her looks. Her eye did meet again
As she perused him. On her cheek I saw
Warm blushes pass; and, as she spoke, methought
Her sweet voice sweeter grew! This is the cold

And wishless maid my passion could not win.
Follow me, Leo!

Leo. Hold! you meditate
Some rash and dreadful thing.

Hugo. Where is't they go?
Into the close and overhanging shade,
Where none shall list their kisses, or perceive
Their fast embraces twine. Oh! at the thought
I feel my heart to move within my breast,
As from its seat 'twould leap. I'll murder him!

Leo. I will not let you go.

Hugo. Release me, Leo!

Leo. Then here I break with thee.

Hugo. What dost thou mean?

Leo. I'll prowl with thee for prey. The roost or fold
I'll rifle with thee; or the snorting sty;
Or scale the granary; or strip the hedge;
Or what thou wilt beside that lawful is.
Unnatural—for cowards or for friends—
That thou shalt do alone.

Hugo. Well, let it pass.

Leo. Besides, thou wrong'st the girl. She is not one
For wantonness, but coy and well advised.
Doubtless (as in these troubled times we've seen
Before) it is some worsted chief, who seeks
The shelter of our wood, till better chance
Refits him for the fray.

Hugo. No more. To night
What shall we do?

Leo. Dost thou not think it looks

Bad weather? 'Tis the quarter of the moon—
We'll have some sport to night. The drowsy loons
Will fast their doors betimes, and, heavy from
Their crackling hearths, to their sound slumber hie
Before the tenth hour chime.

The next scene exhibits the gipsy-king encircled by his petty-larceny crew, in the centre of a wood. From his address to them, we gather that he is holding a bed (or bank) of justice.

King. Sons of the woods! Wild living men that choose
Apart from common civil wights to dwell,
A free and roving tribe, and pitch your house
In shelter'd glen, or under thick bough shade;
Who never feel the sun, nor list the wind,—
Free and familiar with the elements,—
A hardy and a merry living race,—
Your king attends to do you right and favour.
All. Hail to the Gipsy-king!

After this ensue divers accusations and recriminations between Tom and Robin, and between Jack and Kate, which are intended

to be in the comic vein,—a vein which, we think, Mr. Knowles does not breathe freely. The following is a specimen of how the delicate business of courtship is managed in the woods:—

Jack. Last Whitsun eve, she came and courted me,
As I was standing by the alehouse tap,
With my flowered tankard by me: much she praised
My make, my feature, and my cunning eye;
And of a thrifty housewife's comfort spoke,
Who by her side a handy helpmate finds;
Then counted to me, from her worsted purse,
Ten silver shillings and nine sixpences,
Which, with her jack-ass, would her dowry be.
But well I knew her tricks,—so drank my ale.

In the next scene, Leo brings Hugo near to the residence of his mistress, tells him the story of his love for Helen, and places him on the watch. With the exception of a few pretty lines, (one of which,

"None but the morning bird and I were up,"

reminds one of Richard's, "Be stirring with

the lark!") there occurs nothing here which illustrates Mr. Knowles's talent. There is a song, however, hereabouts (we cannot, from the mutilated state of the manuscript, say precisely where), which we take the liberty to insert in our history.

I.

The boat had heard the pilot's "hail,"
The oars were ready, and the wind
Was sporting with the loosen'd sail,
That longed to leave the shore behind;
When William press'd the lip again,
That never lover press'd but he—
That never lover press'd till then—
And left his Emma for the sea.

II.

He did not find a watery grave.
Unharm'd he stood the rising gale;
Unharm'd he rode the swelling wave,
And smiling, furl'd his faithful sail.
But him, that winds and waves would spare,
Relentless love no pity bore;
For William's heart was fond as e'er,
But Emma!—Emma lov'd no more.

Sir Walter, apprehensive that his niece may be lured away by the wood-rangers,

> "Thou hast been listening to the gipsies here;
> The boy I found thee with, and ancient hag,
> Have filled thy thoughts with folly—"

resolves to remove her to a distant part of the country.

Before this is effected, Leo contrives to enter into Helen's chamber, by means of a ladder, and, after a long discussion, prevails on her to elope with him into the wilderness. His eloquence runs after the following pleasant fashion:—

Leo. Fly with me to the woods! A holy man,
Who loves me as a son, will make us one,
Soon as the morning dawns. I rescued him
From murder once. Fly with me to the woods!
I'll lodge thee in a mossy cabin, sweet
And dry, that in a honey-suckle bower
I've made, among a group of evergreens.
There will be room enough for you and me;
And we shall lead a life of joy and love.
I'll hunt for thee, and catch thee venison.
I can outbound the deer. I'll bring thee trout

And salmon from the clearest streams, that run
Over bright pebbles and the moss green weed,
And kill thee birds of every quality;
And thou shalt live as bless'd as love can be."

We are happy in being able to state that the eloquent lover is successful.

The second act commences with an interview between Leo and Hugo, in which the latter, after reminding Leo that they had always been comrades, sharing alike benefits and privations, and that he, Hugo, had aided Leo in rescuing his bride Helen, demands that the other should render him service in return, by murdering his rival. We give the main part of the scene.

Leo. Now, Hugo, speak!
Hugo. We have been comrades long.
Danger and booty we have shared alike,
Through sunshine, and through rain—through storm and calm,
Still hand in hand we've gone. In an old tower,
That was the raven's house, we've lodged at night,
Or in the open field together slept,
Under no better pent-house than the hedge,

Or branch of an old solitary tree!
Has it been so or not?
Leo. It has been so.
Hugo. We've been pursued, and I have kept the hounds
At bay, while thou hast borne the booty off.
The like upon occasion thou for me
Hast done. No obligation—each alike—
Neither in the other's debt alone, yet both
Indebted. Thus far equal we had gone,
Till—yesternight.
Leo. Well, Hugo?
Hugo. Yesternight
Thou wert my debtor in so rich a pledge,
As thou hast left but one way to redeem.
Leo. Tell me that way.
Hugo. When thou didst totter and—
(Though at the time, the cry did burst upon us),
Breathless wert forced to set thy burthen down,
Across my neck the lovely prize I swung,
Nor stopped for pale nor hedge, till far behind
I left the faulting pack!
Leo. I own it, and
Would pay thee with my life.
Hugo. Thy life?—Thy life
I do not ask. Why dost thou turn away?
Hear me!
Leo. I listen.
Hugo. How should he atone
Who robb'd thee of thy Helen?

Leo. By his death;
For Helen's heart is mine.
Hugo. Ay! Is it so?
And think'st thou *unrequited* love is nothing?
A waxen taper's flame, that with a sigh
You may blow out? By Heaven, the happy fool
That feasts upon the lip he loves, a touch—
A simple touch can only have of that,
Which riots in the slighted lover's breast.
He is the proper subject of the god,
And he alone. His heart—his brain—his nerves
Confess the thrall, and all his frame is fire!
E'en such a one am I.
Leo. What wouldst thou, Hugo?
Hugo. This morning, when I rose, from restless sleep,
With troubled dreams, a fever tortured me,
And to the cool and limpid brook I ran,
With parching thirst. Upon the grassy bank
A female lay along. 'Twas Cloe, listless
Of my approach; her jetty hair untied—
Her bosom loosely hid, and labouring
With sighs, that, as she heaved them, thicker seemed
To grow. Transfixed I stood, and gazed, until
Her lips began to move. Oh! then I heard
A sound that all my sense suspended, and
The current stopp'd of my impetuous blood.
It was *his* name she murmured. Had I then
A weapon in my reach, the sweetest lips
That ever quivered with the sigh of love,
I would have closed.

He then proceeds to invite Leo to murder Ferdinand. Leo declines this pleasant proposal; but the other, threatening to betray the secret of Helen's retreat to her pursuers, Leo is obliged to give a seeming consent to undertake the murder, and tracks Ferdinand accordingly into the forest. The rest of the act is consumed by some dialogue between the inferior gipsies; after which Helen encounters Cloe, and they together go in search of Leo, now the husband of the former. In the meantime Leo entices Ferdinand into the recesses of the forest, explains to him the jealousy and bloody intentions of his comrade Hugo, and breaks to him his intention of saving him, if he will give up Cloe to his friend. This condition is rejected; notwithstanding which, Leo in the end agrees to convey his intended victim to a place of security, and to bring the gipsy girl to him, in order that their marriage may be solemn-

ised. The account which the hero of the piece gives of the place of refuge will bear extracting.

Leo. Down in a glen an ancient ruin lies.
It was an abbey once, with spacious aisles—
With cells and chambers, and long passages
Winding about, and opening here and there,—
Some on the floor, and others under-ground,
With ivy, now, within and out o'ergrown.
Its roofless walls wild briers, and shrubs, and weeds
Inhabit. In the pelting rain may come!
The wind unhindered through its chambers go,
And aught, that fancies it, pass in and out
Without a question! I will take you there,
And in a place unknown to mortal, save
Myself, bestow thee."

Another gipsy scene succeeds; in which Long Jack, who was to have married his comrade Kate, excuses himself to his two friends (Tom and Robin) for the non-performance of the wedding, explaining that Kate, with the best intentions, had set out for church, but that an unexpected impediment had occurred.

Within a hundred yards of church,
By the way-side a white-washed dwelling stood,
With glasses, shrivelled lemons, painted jugs,
And flower-pots looking through the window panes,
And on a poplar tree, before the door,
Upon a board, a painted pot of ale,
The froth as white as chalk.

These attractions are too mu[illegible]r the intended bride, who, stepping into the "white-washed dwelling" above mentioned, very speedily found herself incompetent to attend to any other concerns during that day. The marriage seems to be postponed *sine die*. And here the manuscript stops! The last part of the third act, and the whole of the fourth and fifth acts, are, we believe, irrecoverably lost.

The drama of "Leo" was performed with great success at Waterford. Kean played the principal character with such effect, and so entirely to his own satisfaction, that, when he

came to London in 1814, he wished to make his *debut* in "Leo," at Drury-lane. Luckily (for *him*) the play could not be found; and he therefore burst upon the town, as everybody knows, in the character of Shylock.

The success of this play of Mr. Knowles inflamed Kean's ambition. He too felt a desire to become an author—"an Arcadian;" and, accordingly, without loss of time, he set to work, and manufactured a little afterpiece, in two acts, with songs, &c., which was presented to the manager, acted for our tragedian's benefit (on his second visit to Waterford), and—very speedily forgotten. We conclude that he set some value upon it, as he transmitted it *by post*, to Miss Tidswell, who was then in London. It formed, with its large loose writing, its obliterations, its amendments, and its stout covers, a packet of very formidable appearance. Miss Tidswell,

to whom it was presented, accompanied by a demand of several pounds sterling (?) for postage, rejected it without ceremony. Since that time it has not been heard of; and we believe that the very name of it is lost.

CHAPTER VIII.

KEAN'S WANDERINGS—THE DRAMA AT DUMFRIES—YORK—A RARE DANCING MASTER—ARRIVAL IN LONDON—COLD RECEPTIONS—SEES JOHN KEMBLE—ACTS AT WEYMOUTH—PROCEEDS TO EXETER—A QUARREL AT THE RED LION—A JUMP THROUGH A GLASS DOOR—A TEST FOR SILVER.

On leaving Ireland and Cherry's company, Kean once more threw himself upon the world, and became a wanderer on his own account. His first experiment on the public taste was made at Whitehaven, to which place he crossed over with his family. When he arrived there, he had no money, no engagement, no acquaintance, and no reasonable expectation of any sort. He tried recitations, his usual remedy in desperate cases. These failed; and he was obliged to part

with divers articles of dress, in order to obtain food for himself and his children.

From Whitehaven he proceeded to Dumfries, where he had acted as a boy, when belonging to a strolling company. To accomplish this journey, he sold a variety of things (dress, theatrical ornaments, &c.), and with the produce hired a little taxed cart, in which he, his wife, their two children, and the owner of the aforesaid cart, jogged on to Dumfries. At that time our tragedian had a dog called Daran, so named after the black hero in "The Exile." Daran was a fine fellow, who trotted merrily by the side of the family carriage, and killed sheep by the way. In case the provident reader should be desirous of knowing at what expense he may transfer his family, after the before-mentioned fashion, from Whitehaven to Dumfries, be it known that it will cost him four pounds. If he have a dog like Daran, indeed, who can

provide mutton for his family, he may, perhaps, do it for less. For Kean, it is proper to observe, did not use his four-footed friend as a purveyor. Whatever the hunter Daran killed, he consumed or left.

The wonderful ploughman, Burns, has cast a glory around Dumfries. The city is naturally proud of it. We do not know that it did anything to accelerate Burns's fame, or to enlarge his physical comforts whilst alive. But its posthumous acknowledgments of the poet's merits are ample. Towards our poor tragedian, Dumfries certainly did not exhibit any very liberal patronage. He arrived there without money, took refuge in a poor public-house, hired a room, and announced, in the usual attractive style, his intention to give exhibitions of singing and recitations. We do not know what might have been his expectations from the gratitude or admiration of the people of Dumfries, before whom he

had played repeatedly some few years previously; but, whatever they were, they were very speedily converted into certainty. The night for his performance arrived. The entrance-money (he had an eye to the national character) was *sixpence!* Sixpence! Let the reader pause upon the sum; and then let him know that there was in the house—how much? Twenty pounds? Ten? Five? One? Ten shillings, perhaps? Or—we must cut the matter short—there was *Sixpence* in the house! There was one person in Dumfries bold enough to part with sixpence to hear the first tragedian of his time recite the beautiful words of Shakspeare. How we should like to know the name of that ONE, (the Great Unknown of Dumfries!) in order that we might celebrate his liberal spirit with due honour!

These disappointments compelled our hero to dispose of some books belonging to his

wife, and more of his and her clothes. The whole produced two pounds; and with this sum he went forwards to Annan, and from Annan to Carlisle, where he wrote to Mrs. Kean (who had been left at Dumfries), directing her to join him. The sale of a few more useful articles enabled her to set out, without much delay, for the capital of Cumberland.

At Carlisle—"merry Carlisle," as it used to be called—Mrs. Kean arrived at night, with her children, and found her way to a little public-house, where her husband had taken up his quarters. His conduct, previously to her arrival, had not tended to smooth her reception. The landlord, in answer to the clamours of the children for food, said that he had nothing to give them; for that Kean, amongst other enormities, had been running into his debt already. Kean, who was absent from the inn when his wife arrived, now returned, and was enabled to

conquer the hunger of the family; but still affairs wore a gloomy aspect. At last, it occurred to the wanderers, that the fact of the assizes having thrown a large quantity of lawyers into the city, might be turned to their advantage. Kean, accordingly, addressed a letter to the barristers, proposing to recite, to sing, &c. &c., and to leave his reward to their generosity. The answer was, that they did not want to hear anything of the sort. Our learned friends, accustomed to sharpen their wits with the rust of Levinz and Comberbach, did not choose to run the risk of becoming dullards by listening to the puerile fancies of Shakspeare. In this extremity, the landlord (the hard-hearted Boniface, whom we have already referred to,) advised our hero to hire a large room at a venture, and to announce his recitations. Kean took the advice, wrote out his bills (which he always did, to save the

expense of printing), and despatched his usual herald, the bellman, with them round the city. The result was fortunate. The people of Carlisle did not shut their purses so closely as the Dumfries economists. They came to the recitations, and luckily in sufficient quantities to enable the tragedian to pay his expenses, and to obliterate the long line of chalk scores which stood against his name in the little parlour of "the public."

After leaving Carlisle, our adventurers visited Appleby, Penrith, (where their finances compelled them to part with the mutton-eating Daran,) Richmond, in Yorkshire, and various other places, and at last found themselves—utterly destitute—at York. It is needless to repeat the every-day wants and troubles which the poor actor and his family, day after day, encountered in this and other peregrinations. Their long journeys, in all weathers,—their arrivals, weary and foot-

sore, at the squalid public-houses where they put up,—their scanty meals,—their visits to the pawnbroker and the Jew,—their hopeless appeals to the public taste,—the cries of the children (from fatigue or want of food), —the tears of the woman, and the curses of the man,—all these, fifty times repeated, would make but an unprofitable and tedious history. We content ourselves with giving a few facts, illustrative of our hero's forlorn condition; without exhibiting, at every turn, the poverty and wretchedness of his course. At York, as we have said, he arrived, utterly destitute. So extreme was his need, that he wished to enlist as a common soldier, and actually presented himself, for that purpose, to an officer attached to a regiment at York, who very goodnaturedly dissuaded him from his design. He was, perhaps, as desperate of attaining the objects of his ambition, at this particular time, as at any period of his

chequered life. And with his despair, his wife's despondency naturally kept pace. She saw no hope of extricating her infants from the load of misery and want which oppressed them. More than once, she has knelt down by the side of her bed, in which the two half-famished children lay, and prayed that they and herself might at once be released from their sufferings. Happily, they were relieved by the intervention of a friend. The wife of a Mr. Nokes (then a dancing-master at York), heard of their extreme distress, and went with a heart brimful of benevolence to their aid. She was shown up to the room where Mrs. Kean and the children were, and after having ascertained the truth of the report concerning their condition, she spoke kindly to them all, put something in Mrs. Kean's hand, wished her good morning, and left the house. On her departure, Mrs. Kean opened the paper which this excellent

woman had left, and discovered that she had given her a *Five pound* bank note! She threw herself on her knees, and fainted. They had been rescued from absolute starvation.

Mrs. Nokes's kindness did not stop here. She interested her husband on behalf of her *protégés;* and he (who seems to have deserved such a wife,) lent Kean the room in which he received his pupils. An impediment, indeed, was unexpectedly thrown in the way of this kind act, by Nokes's landlord, (a person of the name of Flower, a clergyman,) who said that "no theatrical people should have the room;" but this was finally surmounted by the independent spirit of Nokes. He resolved that Kean *should* have the use of the room, and accordingly the tragedian had it, gave his recitations in it, and cleared 9*l.* by his exertions. Before we leave York for London, the next stage in

our hero's journey, let us consecrate one sentence to the memory of this excellent pair. The active benevolence of the wife, and the kindness and resolute spirit of the husband, ought never to be forgotten. We wish that our history were immortal for their sakes.

A long and weary journey, made partly on foot, partly by provincial carts, or by the common waggons, brought our travellers within five miles of London. "Now," said Kean, "we will walk the remainder alone." It was a word and a blow with him. He dismounted; sent forward the children in the waggon, under the care of some person who undertook to take care of them, and set off with his wife on their five miles' walk. A misgiving came over her heart, she says. Could he mean to *lose* her two little boys?—By no means: matters were not so bad. With all his faults, our player never at-

tempted to act the character of the bad uncle in "The Children in the Wood." The whole party arrived safely in town. In Oxford Street, Kean and his wife held a consultation. He said that he did not know where to go, nor where to send the children. "I have an aunt," said he, "a Mrs. Price; perhaps she will take us in;" and they tried aunt Price accordingly. When they arrived at her lodgings (which were in a small street near Monmouth Street), she happened to be from home. They entered, therefore, and on her return, in half an hour or so, the mantua-maker found her nephew, his wife, (who was personally unknown to her), and their two children, in undisputed possession of her territory. It is our painful duty to state, that aunt Price's reception of the travellers barely approached the resemblance of hospitality. She admitted them, however, and gave them shelter for a week; at the

expiration of which time, they made an incursion into the premises of Miss Tidswell, in Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, with evident intentions of gaining a settlement in her parish. That lady was very prompt in her measures; for after allowing them to remain in her apartments for an hour, they were compelled to sound a retreat, and to regain their position in aunt Price's dwelling.

At this time, Jack Hughes—the reader will remember the magnificent benefit at Gloucester, where Kean and Jack Hughes came forward, hand in hand, like the Siamese twins, and *un*like them, returned the entrance money to the spectators,—well, Hughes at this time was master and manager of Sadler's Wells, and also of the Exeter theatre; and Kean resolved to become one of Jack's company. He applied, and was at once engaged to "act every thing" at Exeter, at two pounds per week. This was the

largest salary he had ever yet received. A little money which the new manager advanced, put our travellers in the way of reaching the west of England. Before they left London, however, Kean took his wife to the theatre, to see Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons act Cardinal Wolsey and Queen Katherine. They were highly delighted—particularly with Mrs. Siddons's performance. On their return home at night, Kean started up and imitated John Kemble to the life. His wife was enchanted. She declared that it was "quite as good as Mr. Kemble." Her husband dropping his mimicry, said, "Shall I ever walk these boards? I will," he continued, energetically,—"and make a hit."

Kean, attached to the Exeter corps, was directed to join it at Weymouth, where the company was then performing. He obeyed, set off, and got as far as Dorchester, at which place he paid his last three shillings for the

breakfasts of himself and family. After this desperate piece of expense, he put his wife and children into a coach, and mounted the coach-box, saying carelessly, that he would tell the driver, "in coachman's slang," that they had no money, and that all would be right. We conclude that this curious experiment succeeded, since the party arrived at Weymouth without accident. Mr. Henry Hughes, Jack Hughes's son, advanced our hero two pounds upon account of his salary, and procured lodgings for him. Kean opened in *Romeo*—contrary to his own inclination—(he did not like the part at any time), and afterwards ran through a variety of characters, of every shade, until the Weymouth season closed, and the company proceeded to their head quarters. At Exeter, he opened in *Octavian*, and played successively Shylock, Richard, Othello, and other first-rate parts. In these, he delighted

the critics; but he did not attract the multitude. That honour was reserved for Harlequin. Nothing else would fill the house. This chequered character, with his wand, his brown cap, his black head, and his singular costume (a glorification of the tartan!), appears to operate as a magnet in country places. When Othello is deserted, and even Romeo's love-making fails, the hero of pantomime is sure to bring a crowd. Old mothers, who frown carefully upon the soft scenes of Juliet —daughters who are cold to their rustic lovers—are drawn irresistibly towards *him*. He is the conqueror of all hearts, the beau ideal of all imaginations, except of the few who choose to waste their leisure in the troublesome employment of thinking. Accordingly, our tragedian frequently played Harlequin in the provinces. When he was first put up for this important part at Exeter, he proved to be really too ill to act. He was a

Harlequin of such reputation, that although another person of some pretensions undertook the part, the house manifested their disappointment loudly. At last he got better, and was able to act. The announcement was made with pride. The manager (who paid him five shillings per night *extra*) distributed handsome placards, on which were written in vast letters—"MR. KEAN will RESUME the character of HARLEQUIN THIS EVENING." Crowds ran to witness the performance. Kean did credit to his fame, and delighted everybody. And when all was over, and the good people of Devon were trudging home to their quiet hearths, full of the pantomimic wonders that they had witnessed, our hero, with a great coat flung over his patch-work dress, and bathed in perspiration, took his customary seat at "The Red Lion," with his brother topers, and drank strong liquors till morning.

At Exeter, Kean rented some convenient rooms over a china-shop. Miss Hake, a little feather-dresser, was his landlady. Her tenants were the china-man, Kean, and Mr. Cawsey, a solicitor. These persons ruled over three parts of the house; the fourth being under the jurisdiction of Miss Hake and her sister. These two ladies, besides being very little, were very precise. Had they supposed Kean capable of the sin of tippling, even in a modest degree, he would never have been a lodger over the china-shop. But they let their rooms to him in one of his sober intervals, and the wild animal was in their quiet country before they were aware. At first, all went on smoothly. He continued to drink, indeed, but his draughts were swallowed at the Red Lion; and he never returned home until long after the Misses Hake were in bed. It seemed as though the halcyon had taken their second

floor, and had brought tranquillity in his train. A single night was destined to dispel this charming fancy! Kean had been acting with spirit, as it turned out, and drinking with equal vigour, when a fellow, unaware of the foibles of actors, disputed the propriety of his performance. Our hero, who was not a man to receive a reproof silently, whether merited or not, retorted in unequivocal language. The critic replied in terms bitterer than before. This brought on a rejoinder; and thus they went on, from bad to worse, waging a fierce battle with their tongues, until Kean, who thought that words were poor things in a case of this sort, started up, intimated that he was going for his swords, and swore that his foe (now beginning to be terrified) should fight him. He left the room accordingly, and ran to his lodgings for the weapons, having on his Harlequin costume. Whether it was that a portion of his excite-

ment evaporated by the way, or that it took a pantomimic turn, we do not know, but on his arrival at home, he seemed more inclined to commit a few minor extravagances, than the great one of killing his adversary for a foolish speech. He mounted the door-steps, entered the house (the door was not fastened), ran up the stairs, and without ceremony jumped, Harlequin-fashion, right through a glass-door at the top. It was now three o'clock in the morning, and the smashing of the glass made a tremendous noise. Mrs. Kean (who had been sitting up for him) was alarmed; Mr. Cawsey, the Solicitor, was alarmed; both the little Misses Hake were very much alarmed. Our hero recovered himself, just as Mr. Cawsey, in his night-cap, was putting his head out of his bed-room door. In another instant, Mrs. Kean appeared; and shortly afterwards, scarcely visible in the imperfect light, peeped forth the two little Misses Hake, in their

night-dresses, trembling with all their might. Fronting them all, and gazing stedfastly at Mr. Cawsey, who cautiously advanced, stood the tipsy Harlequin. That personage now threw himself into a position, set his arms a-kimbo, began rolling his black head round and round—quick—quicker—quicker still—they thought that it never would stop. At last, making a sudden spring towards Cawsey, he "cleared" the Solicitor (night-cap and all) at a bound, and disappeared like a ghost!

We do not wonder that little Miss Hake, unacquainted as she was with the transits of Harlequins, should imagine that our hero had gone off in a flash of sulphur. What Cawsey, with his extinguished candle, surmised, touching the character of his black-visaged visiter, we do not presume to guess. All, however, was cleared up by Mrs. Kean's confessions in the morning, when the victims of this mad frolic regained their composure, and moral-

ised (somewhat too much at length) on the heinousness of the offence. As to Kean himself, notwithstanding the entreaties of his wife (who followed him to his room, after his exploit), he insisted upon having "his swords," seized them, after a struggle, with the air of a conqueror, and went off once more to the Red Lion, with a renewed desire for vengeance.

During the three following days, he was neither seen nor heard of, by his wife or family. At the expiration of that time, he returned, saying that he had "been doing a noble action." One is naturally inquisitive about noble actions. Even his wife, although she was ill in bed, betrayed some curiosity on the point; he whereupon informed her (gravely) that he had been drinking for three days with a poor actor, who was about to leave Exeter, in order "to keep up his spirits." In regard to his adversary at the Red Lion, he

said that "the fellow was a coward," and had fled. His swords, therefore, were happily unstained, and in good condition, and as fit for contesting the English or Scotch crown, with the Earl of Richmond or the Thane of Fife, as formerly. His quarrel excited in him no disgust towards his old friend, the Red Lion. His visits there were as frequent as ever. In fact, there seems to have been some mysterious attraction in the place—(could it be the liquor?) It was the great place of resort for all the actors. Amongst the rest, one man, of the name of Middleton, was never satisfied that his five-and-twenty shillings (which he received weekly, in silver) were good, until he had tried their metal at the Red Lion. Twenty-five sixpences, and as many glasses of gin and water, were the *change* that Mr. Middleton regularly received in return for his weekly salary. How he tested the quality of the sixpences, or whether or not

his scepticism extended to them, we are not competent to say.

The professional course of our hero, during this sojourn at Exeter, was as full of variety as his heart could have wished. He played the leading characters in tragedy; he played Harlequin; he played the musical part of *Count Belino*, in "The Devil's Bridge;" he played the *Prince*, in "Cinderella;" he taught *Cinderella* herself to dance; he instructed the whole *corps de ballet!* His reputation in the Terpsichorean art was so great, that the proprietor of an Exeter paper (who was also a bookseller) suggested that he should take a room for the purpose of teaching dancing, and promised to send his own sons there. Kean declined this, but offered to give the boys the required instructions. "All I shall ask in return," said he, "is an old Latin dictionary which I saw in your shop." The bargain was struck, and the

young booksellers (there were five of them!) came to Kean's lodgings, and stamped away before him every evening; he singing during the performance, but otherwise paying little attention to the improvement of his pupils. He was rewarded in the end with the Latin dictionary, with which he busied himself for a long time afterwards, culling words and phrases from it, and using and misusing them upon every occasion. He was as proud of his little incursions into the classical country, as an Oxford or Cambridge professor.

Previously to his leaving Exeter, however, we ought to state that he took a benefit (this was on the 20th of April, 1812), and played *Luke*, in "Riches;" *William*, in "The Sailor's Return;" and *Frederick, Baron Willinghurst*, in "Of Age to-morrow." It appears that, in the course of the second piece, there was "A treble hornpipe by

Mr. Kean, Miss Quantrell, and Mr. Johnston;" and that "tickets were to be had of Mr. Kean, at Miss Hake's, feather-maker, No. 211, High-street."

We hope that the little landlady has, by this time, "feathered her nest" to her own entire satisfaction.

CHAPTER IX.

ATTRACTIONS OF GUERNSEY—A REBEL IN THE PLAY-HOUSE—BRIXHAM—A SECOND VISIT TO EXETER—AN UNPOPULAR ACTOR—MASTER BETTY AGAIN—TEIGNMOUTH—PROPOSALS FROM THE OLYMPIC—DISTANT PROSPECT OF A THEATRE ROYAL—BARNSTAPLE—A WALK TO DORCHESTER—DOMESTIC TROUBLES—INTERVIEW WITH MR. ARNOLD—ENGAGEMENT WITH DRURY LANE THEATRE—HIS SON'S DEATH—DEPARTURE FOR LONDON.

(1812.) THE next scene in our hero's changeful life lies in the island of Guernsey. He went to this place, with the rest of Hughes's company, about the early part of May, 1812. Mrs. Kean followed shortly afterwards; and, on landing, was accosted by the tragedian, who was in tip-toe spirits, with—"My dear Mary, what do you think? I can get brandy here for eighteen-pence a

bottle! I can drink it instead of beer."— Who would not live in Guernsey!

Whilst he was on the island, he played his usual round of tragic characters, and as usual was very much admired. And, as in Exeter he was invited to give young gentlemen instructions in dancing, so in Guernsey he was requested to polish their intellects by giving them readings in Shakspeare. These "arduous duties," (to use the phrase of gentlemen who do their work by deputy,) were not to be kept up by water. Accordingly, our hero appealed to the Guernsey brandy "at eighteen-pence a bottle," for support. Sometimes that which was intended merely for support, turned out to be too strong for the purpose, and overturned the tragedian's faculties. And in this vanquished condition he was seen by various of the sober-living people of the island. Now in Guernsey, as in other places, they do not

like to see a man continually giving way before the bottle. If he is to "crack" one every day, it should be literally rather than metaphorically. In short, they began to consider him little better than a sot. In the country, the moral character is a part of one's subsistence: a man cannot thrive there, unless it be good. It points which way he goes. The ring and sound of it is heard everywhere. It is his true sign of distinction—his shadow, without which he would be lost, like the unhappy Peter Schlemil. Kean discovered this on his benefit night, when the Guernsey folks, taking umbrage at his excesses, avoided the theatre. Notwithstanding his great talents, he fell into disgrace with the people; and, to make his situation complete, he quarrelled with the manager also. The officers of the garrison had "commanded" a play, and Hughes put up "Charles the First," and sent the principal

part to Kean. As it happened, Kean liked neither the part nor the play, and resolved not to act in it. Having formed his resolution, he fortified himself with courage to act up to it. In a word, he appealed once more to his friend the brandy. It was true liquor, and did not desert him; and when the night for performance arrived, and our hero was requested to attend, he returned, in very pithy terms, a flat refusal. Hughes waited, and waited, and personally endeavoured to induce him to play; but the only reply that he obtained from the tragedian was in the shape of a billet, which announced that "King Charles had been beheaded on his way to the theatre, and therefore it was impossible that he could appear." Mr. Hughes,—who, in his imagination, heard the stampings, the knockings with sticks, the whistlings, the chorus of hisses, which generally indicate the impatience of an audience,—resented our hero's

wit, and issued strict orders that Mr. Kean should not be admitted into any part of the house. Having done this, his anger was somewhat assuaged; and he sat down to manufacture "an apology," the particulars of which have not reached us, (we suppose, however, that it ran in the approved terms—"Mr. Kean's medical advisers," &c. &c.) and prepared to read the part himself. Kean, however, although he had a mortal aversion to *act* the part of Charles, had no objection to witness the representation of it. Indeed, he was a little curious to see how they would supply his place. Accordingly, as soon as the hour for drawing up the curtain had struck, he marched boldly to the theatre. Remorse for his desertion—misgivings as to his admission—were altogether out of the question. He walked triumphantly up to the stage-door, knocked authoritatively, and was—civilly desired to depart. It was a

civility which he did not understand. He remonstrated—he argued—he threatened: when, finding all of no avail, he proceeded to force a passage after the most approved method of arms. Not to weary the reader with the particulars of the conflict, it is sufficient to say that he eventually attained a seat in the slips, or upper boxes, and sate down very merrily to laugh at the tragedy. He constituted himself the *Tiers-état*. Hughes, the manager—it should be stated here that Hughes, although an excellent fellow, was but an indifferent actor—Hughes was reading his part (the part of Charles) very innocently, and even with some little enthusiasm, when suddenly he heard the voice of his own deserter, shouting out—"Bravo, Hughes!" Hughes's pleasure was damped: he went on with less confidence; but he was again getting warm in the part, when the cursed voice cried out once more—

"Well done, my boy!" Poor Hughes now stood aghast. He did not know what to do. He did not know to what extremities his refractory actor, "flown with insolence and wine," would proceed. That personage, however, soon put an end to his doubts, by an open declaration of war. He laughed, he talked, he sang, he roared at the agonies of Charles (doubly martyred), and altogether became intolerable either to actors or audience. The players were offended that they could not be heard spoiling their parts: the audience pronounced him a nuisance, and resolved that he should be abated. Every five minutes the anger of each of these parties increased. Our hero enjoyed the tumult: he laughed prodigiously at the indignation of his opponents, and returned their menaces with spirit. But he was fated to sink at last. Remonstrances having had no effect—hisses and shouts, and cries of "Throw him over!" having failed—

the constables, those promoters of good order, were called in, and finally turned the scale. The deserter made a stout resistance, indeed, but the guardians of the public peace were too numerous, and prevailed. They ejected him by force from the theatre, and forced him to seek refuge in his own house. In addition to the disgrace of a defeat, the tragedian was, very properly, mulcted of a fortnight's salary, which converted his brandy (for the next fourteen days), if not into the simple element, at least into brandy and water.

After a stay of some months in Guernsey, Hughes and his company prepared to pass over to Weymouth. Kean was invited to accompany them; but he was implacable. To be vanquished and fined at a blow, was too much for his proud spirit. The body of the company, therefore, departed, whilst the head remained behind. It was an un-

lucky time for our hero to show his anger, since his indulging in it was at his own expense. With the manager departed the tragedian's salary, which he could then ill spare. He was again pressed by creditors, and again without a penny in his pocket. To supply his wants; he resorted to his old means of giving singing and recitations, which, under the patronage of the officers of the garrison (they had relented, we suppose), answered so well, that he was enabled to pay his debts, and to quit Guernsey with credit. In fact, he realised the respectable sum of six pounds by his entertainment; its main attraction, however, being the performance of his eldest boy, Howard, who appears to have been a child of exceeding promise.

A little dirty vessel, laden with skins, conveyed the player and his family to Devonshire. They landed at a small town near Exeter (Brixham is the name, we believe),

and announced recitations, &c., again. This time there was a complete failure. Not a single person came. Brixham proved worse by sixpence than the penurious Dumfries. Leaving their trunk of clothes, therefore, at the inn, as a security for the bill, and putting their children, and a woman whom they had hired, into a cart, Kean and his wife set forward to try their luck once more in the ancient city of Exeter.

(1813.) At Exeter they arrived late at night, and, after some difficulty, prevailed on their former landlady, Miss Hake, to admit them. They did not occupy their old lodgings for any great length of time, nor, indeed, did they remain long at Exeter. Kean, however, on the 1st of March, 1813, played *Shylock*, and the 1*st Savage*, in "Nautical Heroism," an afterpiece founded on an adventure of Commodore Byron in the Straits of Magellan; and for his benefit he acted *Cato*, and had a good house. On his return home,

after personating the Roman stoic, his wife asked him how he had played. His reply was—"Pretty well. I was not John Kemble, you know." This benefit, according to the bills of the night, was under the patronage of — Buller, Esq. Yet, when Mr. Buller's butler came to Kean's residence, saying—"You will have a good house, for MY *Master* patronises the play," our hero vowed that he would not sell a ticket. "If the people won't come and see *my* acting," said he, "it shan't be said that they came and patronised me by Mr. Buller's desire." Alas! our friend did not then know "the people."

Independently of 'his acting' in regular companies, he also (for we presume this must have happened after the company had left Exeter) exhibited, with his son Howard, at the hotel, near the church-yard; the proprietor of which, at that time, was Mr. Foote, father of the pretty Countess of Harrington. Kean was now, however, decidedly out of

favour with all his old friends. Mr. Nation, a gentleman of Exeter, who had formerly patronised him, did not seem desirous of renewing the acquaintance; Miss Hake, the little maker of feathers, plumed herself no longer on her courtesy. The humbler patrons and admirers, of both sexes, whose names and merits have been scratched out of the record by that dull clerk, Oblivion—all appeared willing to forget that our tragedian had ever existed. He resolved to try other regions—

"There is a world elsewhere."

He wrote to Dublin, but received no answer: he wrote to Edinburgh: he wrote to Mr. John Kemble, for a *third* line of business, and received no answer! He offered to teach fencing—to teach dancing: but no one would become his pupil. At last, Mr. Fisher engaged him to act for four nights at the Teignmouth Theatre, and laid the foundation of his fortunes.

Before going to Teignmouth, we ought to state that Kean, about this time, was once more pressed to play (second) with Master Betty: he was then acting at Weymouth. The play being fixed upon, the manager tendered the inferior part to Kean. It was rejected *instanter*. He appealed to the tragedian's feelings—to the "cause of the drama;" but the tragedian was marble. Failing in these attempts, the master of the troop put up the tragedy without more ceremony, according to his own cast, and awaited the result of his experiment. Our hero adopted his ancient remedy;—he ran away. He had not played "The First Savage" in vain. It enabled him to take to the woods, and dine once more with the squirrels. He was absent—invisible—for a couple of days. When he returned, which he took care should be "the day *after* the fair," he was found in front of the theatre, stalking up and down in a more

than tragic fury. His brow was stormy; his hands were in his pockets; and he himself was employed in swearing bitterly at managers, and plays, and Fortune! After some persuasion, he was enticed home, where —his thunder melting into rain—he burst into a passion of tears, and recovered. It was a long time, however, before he forgot the indignity; for he was "a good hater."

A short time before this event (or afterwards, for our annals here are a little wanting in precision), he was engaged to act with Mrs. Jordan. In fact, he did play *Don Felix*, in "The Wonder," to her *Violante*, and *Frank Heartall*, in "The Soldier's Daughter," to her *Widow Cheerly*. That he acquitted himself very indifferently on both these occasions is undeniable, for he drank deep and forgot his parts; but it is not true, as has been reported, that our great comic actress played the Fury—we suppose to his

Orestes—and scolded him with a vigour that deserves immortal mention. She was simply displeased with him, because his conduct marred the effect of her own good acting; but nothing further. After this, Kean never again came in collision, as an actor, either with Mr. Betty or with Mrs. Jordan.

Let us now proceed to Teignmouth. During Kean's second residence at Exeter, he received an offer from Mr. Fisher, the Teignmouth manager, and eventually agreed to play four nights at his theatre. His finances being in their usual state, he started for Teignmouth alone, leaving Mrs. Kean and their two children at Exeter, with directions for her to open and answer any letter that might arrive in his absence. An opportunity speedily occurred; for a day or two after he had commenced his new engagement, a letter arrived from Mr. Elliston, then manager of the Olympic theatre, in London. It contained

a tender of three pounds per week for the tragedian's services, part of which were to consist in being acting manager of the Olympic. Mrs. Kean, knowing only that her husband was eager to play in London, and being ignorant of all distinctions between its theatres, instantly closed with Elliston's proposal. It was a golden bait, and she clutched it greedily. From five-and-twenty or thirty shillings to three pounds per week was a triumphant step. She was proud of being able to carry such news to her husband, and when, a few days afterwards, she received a note from him, desiring her to repair to Teignmouth with his son Howard, she was impatient till she could deliver the brilliant tidings of the new engagement. To her surprise, the tragedian received the news with a torrent of reproaches. He wished to have an opportunity of exhibiting his talents in London, it is true, but not at one of the minor

theatres; Covent Garden and Drury Lane were the temples of fame towards which his ambition pointed, and he swore, in grand terms, that he would never perform in London on humbler boards.

He proceeded however to complete his agreement with Fisher, and rehearsed and afterwards acted Rolla for his benefit. After the play ("Pizarro") there was "Chiron and Achilles," in which piece his son Howard performed, and the entertainments closed with a pantomime, in which Kean sustained his old character of Harlequin. He played throughout effectively, and cleared about fourteen pounds, as his share of the house. This was an evening pregnant with great consequences; for among other persons who contributed to fill the theatre were Dr. Drury (once head master of Harrow school) and his lady. They were exceedingly struck with Kean's talents; and when Mrs. Drury came

the next day to pay for the box which they had occupied, she intimated to Mrs. Kean that she hoped some good might arise from their visit to the theatre; for that Dr. Drury was to dine that day with General St. Leger, to meet Mr. Pascoe Grenfell, one of the committee of Drury Lane theatre. Mrs. Drury, went on to say that her husband meant to speak of Kean as he deserved, and to try whether or not he could obtain for him an engagement in London.

The Olympic engagement, if so it might be called, was now doubly obnoxious. In proportion as Kean's hopes of appearing at Drury Lane arose, his indignation towards all relating to the Olympic increased. It was the cause of numberless domestic disputes; in the midst of which came a letter from Dr. Drury, announcing that from his representation of Kean's talents, Mr. Pascoe Grenfell had recommended him to Mr.

Whitbread as an actor likely to do service to the theatre; that Mr. Whitbread had written instantly to Dr. Drury, requesting that Kean would repair to London, where some trial parts should be given to him. This was delightful; but unhappily our hero had no money to help him on to the metropolis, and he had moreover two new engagements on his hands, with the Barnstaple and Dorchester managers. He therefore wrote to Dr. Drury his thanks, stating how his time was forestalled, and adding that if he should have a successful benefit, he would obey Mr. Whitbread's direction, and immediately proceed to London.

It was at this time that Howard, the little boy whom we have more than once adverted to, fell ill. The hooping-cough attacked him; and Kean, who in general was but little disturbed by the tender emotions, was sincerely grieved. He was compelled to go through

his labours; but he sent for his wife and children, in order that they might be near him. They repaired to Barnstaple, and were received and treated with great kindness by the manager. Kean's salary here was two pounds per week. He made a short stay at the place, however, for the theatre was small and badly attended. It was necessary to live, and to get money for the London expedition; and he therefore proceeded to Dorchester.

Kean's improvidence has been the theme of many a tongue, but few of his acts exceed the absurdity of his starting for Dorchester *in a post-chaise*, without funds sufficient to carry himself and his family one quarter of the way. They set off indeed in the post-chaise, and accomplished the first stage of their journey; but an accurate survey of their exchequer being then made, it was found necessary that Mrs. Kean and the eldest child, Howard, whose illness was

increasing, should proceed in the coach, and that Kean himself, with his youngest son *on his back*, should trudge forward on foot. It was not the first time that he had acted the foot traveller, but it was the first time that he had carried double. A stout heart, however, and a dozen merry companions, all members of the same company, vanquished many of the evils of the way. They set forward cheerfully, and performed more than half their task that day. At night, they stopped at a humble inn on the road side, where Kean fed the child, and put him to bed (in his clothes); and in the morning, forgetting the oriental custom of ablution, took him forwards in his original Barnstaple dust. One or two of the actors relieved our hero from his child-burthen occasionally, particularly a good-natured comedian of the name of Clifford, who several years afterwards was introduced by the (then celebrated

actor) Kean to his son, as the gentleman who had carried him in his infancy on this memorable journey. About noon on the second day, Mrs. Kean, who, with her boy Howard, was on the look-out for her husband's arrival, beheld the regiment of strollers approaching the town. They came in by twos and threes, hot, dusty, tired, and with beards that, except in colour, would have done honour to the chin of Abomelique, the rear being brought up by Kean himself, with the child delighted and crowing upon his back. Mrs. Kean, whose maternal eye beheld in an instant the child's hat and great coat utterly spoiled, began lamenting the demolition of his finery; but she was quickly stopped by the tragedian, who told her in brief terms, "to be thankful that he had brought him home at all."

The theatre at Dorchester was, by a degree,

worse than that of Barnstaple. There was less business, and a small salary; and to crown the general distress and anxiety of the time, the little sick boy Howard became an idiot. The violence of his cough occasioned, it was said, water in the brain, and he was evidently in imminent danger. The poor actor, however, has no time for mourning. He must work in order to earn his morning's meal: he must dance, and sing, and make merry, and repeat the old jests, and laugh and make others laugh, during the season of his despair. Kean was obliged to play as usual. One night, after having dressed for his part at home, he threw a large cloak over his theatrical attire, and took his way gloomily to the play-house. He was to act *Octavian* in "The Mountaineers," and "a Savage" in some farce—*Kankoo*, it is believed, in "Perouse." Mrs. Kean remained at home. She was employed, nursing their sick child in the

only little room they had, when, about midnight, she heard a quick step approaching the door. Suddenly Kean himself entered: he was in a state of extreme agitation, and could scarcely speak. At last, he made an effort and cried out, "My fortune is made! my fortune is made!" His eye at that moment falling on his suffering child, he qualified his exultation. "Let but Howard live," said he, in a gentler voice, "and we shall all be happy yet." To Mrs. Kean's inquiries as to what had caused all this tumult, he replied nearly to the following effect. [The events of this night had such a prodigious effect upon the fortunes of himself and his family, that almost every particular (many of which would else have been, at this distance of time, indistinct) remains clear and unforgotten.]

"When the curtain drew up," Kean began, "I saw a wretched house. A few people in

the pit and gallery, and three persons in the boxes, showed the quantity of attraction that we possessed. In the stage-box, however, there was a gentleman who appeared to understand acting. He was very attentive to the performance. Seeing this, I was determined to play my best. The strange man did not applaud; but his looks told me that he was pleased. After the play, I went to the dress-room," [this was under the stage] "to change my dress for the 'Savage,' so that I could hear every word that was said over-head. I heard a gentleman (who I supposed was the gentleman of the stage-box) ask Lee the name of the performer who played the principal character. 'Oh!' answered Lee, 'his name is Kean—a wonderful clever fellow; a great little man. He's going to London. He has got an engagement from Mr. Whitbread;—a great man, Sir.' 'Indeed!' replied the gentle-

man, 'I am glad to hear it. He is certainly very clever; but he is very small.' 'His mind is large: no matter for his height,' returned Lee to this. By this time, I was dressed for the 'Savage,' and I therefore mounted up to the stage. The gentleman bowed to me, and complimented me slightly upon my play, observing, 'Your manager says that you are engaged for London?' 'I am offered a trial,' said I, 'and if I succeed, I understand that I am to be engaged.' 'Well,' said the gentleman, 'will you breakfast with me in the morning? I am at the ——— hotel. I shall be glad to speak to you. My name is Arnold; I am the—*Manager of Drury Lane theatre.*' I staggered as if I had been shot. My acting in 'the Savage' was done for. However, I stumbled through the part, and—here I am."

After finishing his story, he could think and talk of nothing but the approaching

interview with the London manager. Morning arrived, and Kean (after dressing himself "as respectably as he could," says our information) repaired to the hotel to breakfast. He was received graciously, and after some conversation as to his experience on the stage, his cast of characters, &c., &c. (which occupied the intervals of the meal), he was finally engaged by Mr. Arnold on behalf of Drury Lane theatre, for a term of three years, at a salary of eight, nine, and ten pounds per week, for each successive year; and he was to have six "trial parts." In two hours from the time of his leaving home, he returned to his wife with the above information. He seemed half out of his senses with delight. He had been well received and well entertained, and had now touched the summit of his ambition. "Mr. Arnold," observed Kean to his wife, "certainly regretted that I was not half a head taller. 'With your fine

Italian face,' said he, 'your fortune would be made.' "

Joy is communicative, and Kean had no desire to keep his good fortune to himself. One of the first persons made acquainted with it was Dr. Drury, to whom he was so much indebted. The following letter, addressed to that gentleman soon after the morning interview with Mr. Arnold, exhibits not only our hero's gratitude to his correspondent, but also the benefits which he had derived from Ainsworth's Dictionary, his acquisition of which we have already mentioned. It is surely a curiosity.

"*Dorchester, Nov.* 21, 1813.

"Sir,

"I have again and again read your instructive letter, and have each time received additional pleasure from the perusal. Be assured, sir, I shall treasure the admoni-

tions it contains *memoria in æterna;* the *verbum* from you is alone sufficient to create a *sapientia* in the object that may have been insensible before. The interview between Mr. Arnold and myself has already passed; that gentleman has honoured me with a visit in Dorchester, the result of which I feel will be as satisfactory to you as liberal and exalted to me. I have competence for *three years* as a *certainty;* but if my talents should in London be favoured by that distinguished approbation they have provincially been rewarded with, every compensation * shall be made, independent of the present engagement. I have not yet received an answer from Mr. Whitbread, and should conceive Mr. Arnold's introduction of himself has rendered it unnecessary. I certainly, sir, with submission to your judgment, should

* This appears to be unintelligible.

be proud to avail myself of the opportunity of paying my devoirs to Mr. Grenfell. Such services I think should be paid by every mark of attention and respect. You have, sir, opened a path of happiness to me, so sudden, so unexpected, that I can scarcely think it but a dream. *Ita ad hoc ætatis a pueritia fui, ut omnes labores periculo consueta habeam.* You have dispelled those clouds and difficulties, and the event, I trust, shall render me deserving of such exalted friendship. In the name of my family, once more I beg you to receive our heartfelt thanks, and believe me, sir, with every deference to your opinions, strict observation to your precepts and example, and continued feelings of gratitude,

"I am, dear sir,

"Yours sincerely,

"E. KEAN."

"DR. DRURY."

Two days after writing this letter, his poor little boy Howard died. It is worth observing, how much more eloquently he writes under the influence of sincere grief, than when prompted only by the desire of displaying his imperfect erudition. Let the reader compare the following brief communication with the gaudy half-naturalised rhetoric of the former letter.

"*November* 25, 1813.

"The joy I felt three days since at my flattering prospects of future prosperity, is now obliterated by the unexpected loss of my child. Howard, sir, died on Monday morning last. You may conceive my feelings, and pardon the brevity of my letter.

"Mr. Arnold saw me play *Alexander* and *Octavian*. This heart-rending event must delay me longer in Dorchester than I intended. Immediately I reach London, I

will again, and I hope with more fortitude, address you. In the midst of my affliction I remember your kindness, and,

"With the greatest respect,

"Sign myself yours, &c.

"E. KEAN."

"DR. DRURY."

***

The death of his eldest-born appears to have wounded Kean very painfully. The child died at eight o'clock in the morning. The father was affected to a degree bordering on suffocation. His passions were at all times uncontrollable, and upon the present occasion, after some few attempts to think that all was for the best, he flew out of doors in an agony of grief, and drank to a prodigious extent "in order to forget his loss." The brandy, however, instead of soothing or stupifying him, made him mad. He returned to his house in an outrageous state, (his grief

still uppermost,) wept and lamented the child, and swore that he would wake it from the dead. At last, exhausted by his anguish, and affected of course by the liquor which he had drank, he fell into a hot and uneasy sleep. In the morning he was more composed.

In the midst of all this sorrow, he was obliged to proceed with his theatrical engagement at Dorchester. Indeed it was necessary to do so, in order to entitle himself to a benefit, by which means alone he could hope to pay for his child's funeral, and the medical expenses which had been incurred before its death. He took his benefit, therefore, and derived from it sufficient for these purposes. But he was still without money for his London journey. The manager of Drury Lane theatre had not tendered him any, not being aware, of course, of his exigencies. In this dilemma, the Dorchester

manager, Mr. Lee, very good-naturedly advanced him five pounds, and with part of this sum in his pocket (for a portion was necessarily left with his wife, who remained in the country), he set forward with a beating heart to try his fortune on the metropolitan stage.

NOTES TO VOLUME I.

Note A. (p. 8.)

Kean was born in Gray's Inn, and not in Ewer street; but the circumstances related in the following letter, which we transcribe from a newspaper, wear the look of truth:—

"Sir—The biographers of Kean have never yet given a correct account of his early life, which is very singular, as the materials for this part of his history could have been collected with such apparent facility, and at the same time would have afforded to his admirers some curious circumstances in the great tragedian's life. Kean, then, sir, was brought up, and I believe born, in a very humble tenement, now belonging to the writer of this, at No. 61, Ewer-street, St. Saviour, Southwark; and so wretchedly off was poor Kean, with his sister Phœbe Carey, and his mother Mrs. Carey, that even to this day they are talked about by the old inhabitants who remember the family. Mrs. Carey (who died about the time of Kean), with her daughter Phœbe Carey, and Kean, gained their precarious livelihood by frequenting the fairs with the itinerant showmen, and I believe Richardson numbered the Kean family (as he says he has done many of the 'reglars' of the present day) in his *dramatis personæ*. Kean, when grown up, with

his mother and sister Phœbe (what has become of Phœbe Carey?) left Ewer-street and commenced strolling, playing Harlequin or any other character, which business is sometimes termed by theatricals the "saw-dust line." Thus was Kean engaged, when by accident he emerged from his native poverty and obscurity, and became the first man of his day! Kean's early habits never forsook him—his imprudence most likely shortened his days. It is supposed that Kean received a liberal education, as he frequently made classical quotations; this was not the fact. His parent, Mrs. Carey (no one recollects Kean's father), could not frequently purchase a quartern loaf, and of course could not pay for a quarter of Latin; therefore the knowledge he attained must have been the result of his riper years, and of his extraordinary talent or application. Kean owed very little to his parents but his birth. An anecdote is told of him characteristic of the man:—An old friend invited Kean to dine with him, and, to give Kean a treat, promised him a baked shoulder of mutton, and potatoes under. Kean was punctual to time, and was seen at the window anxiously waiting for the servant, who was sent to the baker's for the dinner. Kean, when the girl returned, heard her mistress direct the meat to be removed from the baking-pan to a dish; he instantly flew to the top of the kitchen stairs, and calling aloud, begged that the mutton might not be moved from the brown pan, but that potatoes and all should be brought and served up as they came from the oven. Kean was used to this method when a lad, and had never forgotten

the savoury relish which the brown pan and its delicious contents afforded him in his boyish days.

"J. W.

"Long Room, Customs, Dec. 7."

Note B. (p. 49.)

We cannot vouch for the correctness of the next extract, but it has been given in print, and may be true. The reader will judge for himself. We are not acquainted with the language of the Houyhnhnms, but we imagined it to have been of a purer cast. It is possible, however, that the education of palfreys brought into London at a tender age, is too often neglected in the material parts, and sacrificed to the trivial accomplishments of music and dancing (in the ring).

"We recollect," the writer says, "once hearing Davies, the former manager of Astley's Amphitheatre, describe the occasion upon which he first saw Kean; and as the circumstances cannot be more impressively related than in his own graphic detail, we shall content ourselves with transcribing his words from our note-book:—

"'I was passing down Great Surrey-street one morning, when, just as I comed to the place where the Riding-house now stands, at the corner of the 'Syleum, or Mag-dallen, as they calls it, I seed Master Saunders a-packing up his traps. His booth, you see, had been there standing for some three or four days, or thereabouts; and on the boards in front of the painting—the *prosseniom*, as the painters says—I seed a slim young chap with marks of paint—and bad paint it was, for all the world like raddle on the jaw of a sheep—on his

face, a-tying up some of the canvass wot the wonderfulls't carakters and curosties of that 'ere exhibition was painted upon. And so, when I had shook hands with Master Saunders, and all that 'ere, he turns him right round to the young chap wot had just throwed a summerset behind his back, and says, 'I say, you bloody Mister King Dick, if you don't mind wot you're arter, and pack up that 'ere wan pretty tight and nimble, we shan't be off afore to-morrow, so we shan't; and so, you mind your eye, my lad.' That ere 'bloody Mister King Dick,' as Master Saunders called him, was young Kean, wot's now your great Mister Kean."

NOTE C. (p. 35.)

The following statement is said to have been derived from the mouth of Old Richardson, the manager of the company in which Kean passed a portion of his youth:—

Windsor fair commenced on a Friday, and after all our impediments we arrived safe, and lost no time in erecting our booth. We opened with *Tom Thumb* and the *Magic Oak*. To my great astonishment, I received a note from the Castle, commanding *Master Carey* to recite several passages from different plays before his Majesty, King George the Third, at the Palace. I was highly gratified by the receipt of the above note; but I was equally perplexed to comply with the *commands* of the king. The letter came to me on Saturday night; and as Mastr *Carey's* wardrobe was very scanty, it was necessary to add to it before he could appear in the presence of royalty. My purse was nearly empty, and to

increase my dilemma, all shops belonging to Jews were shut, and the only chance we had left was their being open on the Sunday morning. Among the Jews, however, at last, we purchased a smart little jacket, trowsers, and body linen; we tied the collar of his shirt through the button-holes with a piece of black ribbon; and, when dressed in his new apparel, Master Carey appeared a smart little fellow, and fit to exhibit his talents before any monarch in the world. The king was highly delighted with Edmund, and so were his nobles. Two hours were occupied in recitations; and his abilities were so conspicuous to every person present, that he was pronounced an astonishing boy, and a lad of great promise. The present he received for his performance was rather small, being only two guineas, though, upon the whole, it turned out fortunate for the family. The principal conversation in Windsor for a few days, at that time, was about the talents displayed by Master *Carey* before the king. His mother, therefore, took advantage of the circumstance, and immediately engaged the market-hall for three nights, for the recitations of *Edmund*. This was an excellent speculation, and the hall overflowed with company every night. Mrs. *Carey* joined me on the following Monday at Ewell fair; and all the family, owing to their great success, came so nicely dressed, that I scarcely knew them. Mrs. Carey and her children did not quit my standard during the summer.

"After a short period, I again got my company together, and with hired horses I went to Waltham Abbey. I took a small theatre in that town, the rent

of which I paid fifteen shillings per week. It was all the money too much. My company I considered very strong, consisting of Mr. Vaughan, Mr. Thwaites, Master Edmund, his mother, and the whole of his family, Mr. Saville Fawcett, Mr. Grosette, Mr. and Mrs. Jefferies, Mr. Reed, Mrs. Wells, and several other performers, who are now engaged at the different theatres in the kingdom. Notwithstanding we acted the most popular pieces, the best night produced only nine shillings and sixpence. Starvation stared us in the face, and our situation was so truly pitiable, that the magistrate of the town, out of compassion to our misfortunes, 'bespoke a night.'"

NOTE D. (p. 127.)

"Kean had a strong perception of his own powers, and always predicted that he should some day be at the head of his profession. He was a beautiful fencer. His friends wished him to establish a fencing academy. His answer was—'It shall never be said, sir, that I was a fencing-master.' I persuaded him to teach me the noble art as a friend, but he would take no remuneration. He came to us one day in the greatest possible spirits.—'My fortune,' said he, 'is made. Lord Cork has bespoken Othello; we know his reputation as a critic, and I will not lose the opportunity.' The next day we saw him again.—'Well, Kean, what success?'—'Do not name it, sir; I am miserable. Whilst I was playing the finest parts of Othello, and in my best style, my Lord Cork's children were playing at hot

cockles in front of the box, and Lord and Lady C. laughing at them.' [*Anonymous communication.*]

NOTE E. p. 188.

"Betty came as a star to Weymouth, whilst I was there. Kean would not play second parts to him; and I remember one evening meeting him in a drizzling rain on my return from the theatre. He had been wandering about the whole night, unable to endure the mortification he experienced. I reasoned with him, but it was in vain; "I must feel deeply, sir. He commands overflowing houses; I play to empty benches. I know my powers are superior to his." To please us he studied the part of *Zanga*, and played it for his benefit. The farce was a pantomime called *The Judgment of Paris*, in which he played harlequin. He was much puzzled to dress *Zanga*. We provided for him the brass claw of a large mahogany table, which was fastened to a clouded calimanco robe; and made an admirable representation of a tiger's skin and foot. He took the part of *Zanga* for his second benefit after his appearance in London. I was unable, from the excessive crowd to get within sight of the stage, but hearing a tremendous shout of applause, I asked if it was not caused by the words, "*Then lose her.*" I was right; I had not lost the effect those words had produced upon me from the night I had heard them at Weymouth." [*Same.*]

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

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LIFE

OF

EDMUND KEAN.

CHAPTER I.

KEAN'S ARRIVAL IN LONDON — ATTENDANCE ON A MANAGER — LETTER TO DR. DRURY — A TRAGEDIAN'S POVERTY — ARRANGEMENT FOR HIS DEBUT.

In the early part of November, 1813, Kean found himself pennyless, friendless, and alone, in the "stony-hearted" streets of London. He still had dreams, indeed, of fame and prosperity; but he was not without misgivings also, which materially tarnished their brilliancy. The present, moreover, was totally unprovided for; and to him the adage,

"While the grass grows," &c., was unhappily too familiar. His wife and child were still in the country. He had obtained a small advance from Mr. Lee, as the reader will remember, and with this he had started for London. But, in order to enable him to bring his family to town, he was compelled to become once more a borrower. He accordingly appealed to the Drury Lane treasurer, stating his exigencies, and a sum of 8*l.* was the result. This was duly transmitted to Dorchester, and Mrs. Kean and her son Charles came, without loss of time, to London.

When they arrived, they found Kean in a state of extreme agitation, occasioned principally by his own intense anticipations. "My God!" said he, "If I should succeed now, in London?" "If I *should*," added he, "I think that it would drive me mad." There was a long interval, as it turned out, between his hopes and their accomplishment, during

which his fever had time to subside. In the course of this period, he endured all the privations and annoyances which a poor man of ambitious spirit may be supposed to suffer. Poverty, disappointment, and neglect were his daily companions. His reasonable expectations were almost extinguished; his anxiety was trebly increased. And no one lent him any help. It is not on record that any one of his professional brethren countenanced him, in any way. On the contrary, the scorn and contumely

"Which patient merit of the unworthy takes—"

were his, in abundance. One person (a full-blown ponderous actress, who thought probably, with Mrs. Siddons, "There's too little of you, to do any thing!") seeing him attending, morning after morning, in the waiting room of the theatre, exclaimed "The little man with the great capes is here again.

Poor little fellow! he'll be smothered in his capes. He wants to come out! What will the stage come to? Who will come next?" We forget who came next to him; but we remember, that (with a single exception) no one has since come *near* him.

After Mrs. Kean had been a week, or thereabouts, in town, her husband began to grow uneasy. He saw no prospect of his being brought forward. He went to the theatre. To his surprise, he found that there was no salary for him. He waited. All the other actors were paid. They received their money, and did not disdain, as he afterwards heard, to make various remarks upon him. At last, (the candle-snuffer being satisfied, we suppose,) he received an audience. Mr. Arnold was full of complaint.

"Young man," said the manager, "you have acted a strange part, in engaging with me, when you were already bound to Mr.

Elliston." The "young man" defended himself with spirit, but without, as it seems, any good effect. Indeed, to say the truth, Mr. Arnold had some ground for being dissatisfied, when he found that another general was claiming his new recruit. Although, we have little doubt, but that, as between Kean and Elliston, the Olympic manager was in the wrong, yet the fact was probably not made very clear to Mr. Arnold. He naturally remonstrated, therefore, with the person who had entered into a treaty with him, and was unable to fulfil it. However the facts might be, the consequences of this misunderstanding pressed very severely upon the poor player. He felt that all he had or hoped for was in jeopardy. And in order that there might be no further misapprehensions, he wrote to Elliston, showing the amount of his correspondence with him, and concluded by asserting, with an em-

phasis (he swore, in round terms, in fact), that he would rather starve than submit to that grand person's pretensions, or act at his renowned Olympic. He wrote, also, to Mr. Whitbread; but the illustrious brewer, (being a man of business only), replied briefly that "he knew nothing of the matter. If Mr. Kean had talent he would be able to show it on his appearance. If not, he must return to the country." And, finally, he wrote to a more sympathising friend, Dr. Drury; and this letter, the more especially as it explains, better than we can do, this interval of time, we shall take the liberty of confiding to the reader. He will perceive, from internal evidence, that we are laying before him a literal transcript of the original document. The history commences in Latin:—

"Væ misero mihi! quanta de spe decidi."

"Never, dear sir, has man suffered

so many mortifications in the short space of three weeks as he whom you have honoured with your protection. If I have, through inadvertency, been really in the wrong, most severely am I punished for it; but till I am convinced by your opinion of my fault, I will pronounce, with those to whom I have already committed the circumstances, I have been treated most unjustly. The whole story, sir, is such a chain of evil consequences, that I cannot unlink the appurtenances, without destroying the whole body of my subject. I shall, therefore, intrude upon your patience, by stating circumstantially the facts, that have caused my present uneasiness, and trust to your wise decision in my favour—to get (in spite of powerful opposition) reinstated in my rights. However grateful I might feel, when you acquainted me, at Teignmouth, that you had employed your interest to the promotion of my appear-

ance at Drury Lane Theatre, yet I have been so much acquainted with disappointment (and particularly on the same subject) that I did not rely on the effort as a certainty, and if I remember right, your own words were 'Do not let it impede any present engagement, for it is but uncertain, though I have hopes of its success.' While at Barnstaple, I received a letter from Miss Tidswell, my relation, dated September 27th, offering me a situation, on the part of Mr. Elliston, for his new theatre in Wych Street. I was to be engaged as acting manager!!! to have the choice of characters; it was positively to open in the beginning of November, and my salary 3*l.* per week. The situation I was in not answering my expectations, made me comply with these terms, which I expressed by letter to Mr. Elliston; in reply to which he answers me in the most vague and opposite manner,

totally contrary to his first proposals, made through the medium of my relation. His letter, dated October 8th, tells me it is not in his power to fix the opening of little Drury; that I am to be engaged generally in the business (which is totally opposite to *principally*)—is not certain of our meeting—but if we should, he does not fear of finding that meeting mutually advantageous; and concludes by requesting me to let him know my residence, in a month from that period. This cannot be termed an engagement. On the contrary, it cancelled my first acceptation of his terms, and I very justly concluded that Mr. Elliston thought no more of the correspondence. Yours, sir, of the 30th of October, was still undecisive, with regard to Drury Lane; but intimated that in case of failure there, you would exert your influence for the Haymarket. The unfortunate delay of the letter, dated the 7th of November, has caused

all the troubles I am involved in, which did not reach me till the 13th, while at Dorchester. The increasing illness of my poor child, which continued drawing near the fatal period, made me think it advisable to procure a situation, where I could for some months be settled, and procure the best medical advice for the occasion. With these sentiments, I addressed Mr. Elliston, told him my engagement at Dorchester concluded at the termination of six nights, and should be happy to know whether he intended to open the Wych Street Theatre, as from the period I closed my engagement I could be at his disposal. I was evidently engaged at Drury Lane Theatre from yours of the 7th, had it not been from the neglect of the post-master, which letter I had not received many hours when I was agreeably surprised by the unexpected appearance of Mr. Arnold, whose great kindness then

makes more unaccountable the total loss of his friendship now. He extolled my talent in the most flattering terms, said he had not a doubt of my success in London, and stated in the language almost of a parent, how unadvisable it was to enter the theatre on a great salary. That such performers seldom came up to the expectations formed of them, &c. &c., and finally engaged me, for three years, on eight, nine, and ten pounds; handling at the same time so severely the Wych Street Theatre, that it made me feel quite rejoiced I had escaped it; for to this hour I do not allow it an engagement. Mr. Arnold and myself parted on the most friendly terms, he assuring me, I should in half a dozen parts, have a fair struggle for public approbation, with the great men of the day. Shylock I had chosen for my opening character. This was all confirmed

by a letter from Mr. Whitbread, congratulating me on my engagement at Drury Lane Theatre! November 20th. To return to Mr. Elliston, a letter from him dated the 15th of the same month, informs me he opened his theatre in Christmas week, and should be glad to see me—no statement of terms—no time specified for engagement —nor what services were required from me. I am not so ignorant of my profession as to have entered upon an engagement without the necessary preliminaries. Had I not been the servant of Drury Lane, I could not have been so mad as to bring my family to London, on a simple negociation with Mr. Elliston, nor could I, at all events, have afforded to lose so much time, as the space from that period to Christmas week. I therefore replied to him, by the information, that I was a member of the Drury Lane company. His

answer of the 23rd is filled with *hauteur* and *upbraidings*, calls me a deserter, and says he will claim his man.

"I believe, sir, on this same day, or near it; it was my fate to endure the domestic affliction, which has made an impression never to be erased. I replied to him in the most submissive terms, stated my great affliction, the advantages I must forego by complying with his demand; in short, produced such arguments as I conceived would have entered the heart of any liberal and feeling man; and concluded (so he tells me, but on my honour I do not remember it) that I would wait on him, personally, when I arrived in London. Seven or eight days passed in Dorchester subsequent to this, and I received no intelligence from Mr. Elliston. On my arrival in town, the first thing I learned was, that Mr. Russell, late of Drury Lane theatre, was, and had been some months,

engaged as acting manager for the Wych Street theatre. This put all my fears at an end; and, on consulting with managers and veterans of the profession, they advised me to take no further notice of the transaction, for Mr. Elliston must know very well he had no claim upon me.

"With no further apprehensions I took my way to Drury Lane theatre, and was received by Mr. Arnold with a more than common appearance of pleasure. He informed me my engagement commenced from that time, and conferred on me an obligation which, in spite of his unkindness since, I must ever acknowledge with gratitude. On the Saturday following I received my salary from the treasury, which stamps me indubitably the servant of the Drury Lane manager. My hopes now I thought were realised; and I looked forward to my debut with an anxious pride and pleasure. What was my asto-

nishment when, on the following Saturday, I was informed by the treasurers they had no account for me. I flew to (my friend I vainly fancied) Mr. Arnold, whose cold repelling looks will never escape my memory, to inquire the cause. He gravely told me, that Mr. Elliston had appealed to him; that I was engaged to Mr. E., and I must settle the matter with that gentleman before I conceived myself a member of Drury Lane. The day passed in fruitless search after Mr. Elliston; for his various speculations render him almost inaccessible, and I returned to my family late in the evening with broken spirits and empty purse. The features of Mr. Arnold were now entirely changed. He seemed to shun me as something noxious; and, if by accident I caught the gleam of his countenance, I was encountered by a frown that seemed to crush every hope I had so late enjoyed. After some correspondence, of little

or no consequence, with Mr. Elliston, we had a personal interview in the presence of Mr. Arnold. In the beginning of the disputation Mr. A. dispirited me, by acknowledging I stood most unfavourably in his opinion; and Mr. Elliston's extreme volubility beat down by force every argument with which I could oppose him. Even Mr. A., with all his authority, could but occasionally get in the simple no or yes; and the object of their resentment was compelled to remain silent, and place his cause, unpleaded, solely to the judgment of these law-makers! The affair ended as indecisive as it began. Mr. Arnold did at last condescend to say, that he thought the most profound submission was to be expected from me; and, on my questioning the subject, told me I was undoubtedly a member of Drury Lane theatre, and he could enter an action against me for playing any where else. This was not my intention; for I decidedly told

Mr. Elliston, I never would enter the walls of little Drury (the name for his theatre). Here we parted. The end of the week approaching, made me dread the consequences of returning a second time without money home. The embarrassments I had already endured are indescribable. In short, sir, had it not been for the generosity of strangers, in whose house I had by accident taken apartments, I know not what might have been the evils attending on it. Friday, sir, was the day appointed for payment at the treasury. I, on Thursday, waited on Mr. Elliston again, who met me with an unexpected degree of complacency; told me he had resolved on relinquishing his claim to my services, and all he would exact from me was to play a few nights at Birmingham, in the Drury Lane vacation. This was rather a compliment than otherwise; and I with pleasure agreed to it. Again, sir, my hopes were at their summit—

my feelings once more tranquil. How transient is the happiness allotted me! On the same evening, after some previous conversation in the theatre having passed between Mr. Elliston and Mr. Arnold, I was called into the apartment, and was told that a gentleman was sent from Drury Lane to officiate for me in Wych Street; in consequence of which I must pay his salary of two pounds per week. I thought this hard, for it levelled my salary to six pounds, which is very trifling in a London theatre, and for the necessary appearance that keeps up the respectability of the profession; but, involved as I was, I found it useless to resist, and even complied with this. Mr. Arnold then told me that he could not again mention my name at the treasury, on the following day, without a written document from Mr. Elliston, which that gentleman promised he would give me. I conceived now the affair was settled, how-

ever repugnant to my feelings; and flattered myself that the next day I should be receiving my salary, and get rid of part of my difficulties. The day, sir, has arrived (Friday the 24th). From ten till three I was employed in running east, west, north, and south of this great city, after Mr. Elliston. At three, I fortunately encountered him at the Surrey theatre, and received from his own hands the required document; and hastened immediately, overcome by fatigue and anxiety, to Mr. Arnold. I could not then see him, therefore sent in my name and *lex scripta*. For nearly one hour I waited in the passage with the rest of the menials of the theatre—had the mortification of seeing them all conducted to his presence before myself; and when summoned at last to appear, was, with the continued brow of severity, informed that I had no claim upon the treasurers. My engagement had all to begin again. I shall

not forget the day of the month. A second week, sir, I returned to my family pennyless. At a period when every body appeared happy at the celebration of the times, our fates appeared clouded and miserable. Your letter of the 23rd, reached me on Monday; and I forgot my cares in the hopes of seeing you, and perhaps overcoming my disagreeables by the public favour—the balmy cordial that heals all actors' sorrows. Judge, if possible, my disappointed hopes, on seeing another person advertised for the very character on which I built my fame. Was this fair dealing? I cannot define justice if it was. Necessity again draws me to the treasury today; and I doubt not but I shall return with some additional mortification.

"If I could form any opinion from the conduct of Mr. Arnold, I should conceive all this was a subterfuge to get rid of his bargain; but his seeing and approving my

humble talent before he engaged me, contradicts this; and I must say, that in the present deplorable dearth of genius in that theatre, any man of ability must be an acquisition. My floating ideas sometimes incline me to imagine, that he may consider I have, in this affair, acted with duplicity, in not mentioning the circumstances of my negociation with Mr. Elliston. Admitting even an engagement, would it not have been madness to have closed my casements against the only ray of sunshine fortune had bestowed upon me? The whole life of an actor (ay, and of many who boast equal talent with those of the metropolis) is sometimes spent in the fruitless endeavour to obtain a London situation. I knew those opportunities once lost are never to be retrieved. Was I to resign my hopes of eminence, for an engagement, not certain, with Mr. Elliston; which, even accepted, must have been the total de-

struction of every future exaltation? Had I known the nature of the entertainments there, I should at the first have given a decided negative to all the proposals from Wych Street.

"I fear, much fear, I have some secret enemies, undermining me in the opinion of Mr. Arnold. I cannot think that this plea alone is sufficient for his determined enmity. Admitting the error on my side, the loss, both of time and money, is mine, not Mr. Arnold's. Wherefore, then, when the business is settled, should he still assume the countenance of anger?

"To all your questions, sir, the single monosyllable answer — 'No.' I was not bound in any legal way to Mr. Elliston; and I must ask,—could he have a legal claim on the service of any man, whose right of performing is by all thought illegal?

"I have now, sir, given a candid and

strictly true account of the transaction, trusting the whole matter to your consideration and friendly interference; and believe me, sir, however the sudden reverses of fortune may perplex me, not for one moment do I forget the obligations you have conferred on,

"Your's,

"Dear Sir,

"With profound respect,

"E. KEAN.

"Saturday morning.

"The circumstances in this letter I should not care (nay, even wish) but were made public, if you concur in that opinion. I shall have the honour, sir, of paying my respects precisely at the time you appoint.

"21, *Cecil Street.*

"To DR. DRURY."

From the 6th of November, 1813, to the 26th of January, 1814, Kean remained at his lodgings, No. 21, Cecil Street, in the Strand, in much the same state of commotion that he appears to have been in at the time of writing the foregoing letter. During this period, he did not receive a shilling from the theatre (except the sum of 8*l.* before alluded to, which was sent to Dorchester), and he neither earned nor borrowed money from any other quarter. He lived—he, his wife, and child—in the most penurious way; sometimes disposing of a few clothes; sometimes, and not unfrequently, being indebted for their food to the untiring kindness of the Misses Williams, with whom they lodged; and occasionally undergoing a course of starvation. They had meat once a week, if possible; but their aliment was generally of the poorest sort, and taken in the slenderest quantities. The necessity of supporting the child as ten-

derly as might be, doubled their difficulties; and something of that pride "which flesh is heir to," prevented their acknowledging the extremity of their distress to their excellent hostesses. These ladies, with a generous delicacy, forbore to ask them for any rent during the first three months of their residence in London, and even resorted to expedients to furnish them with a meal, now and then, when the desperate condition of the poor players became too manifest for concealment. When Mrs. Kean apologised for the rent being still unpaid, Miss Williams (instead of adopting the landlord's usual remedy, and ejecting her debtors promptly into the street) cheered her up; told her that they could wait; and prophesied, good-naturedly, as to the future renown and prosperity of her husband. "There is something about Mr. Kean, Ma'am," said she, "which tells us he will be a great man."

In the meantime, Mr. Sowerby was exhibiting himself in Pierre, and giving the *outward* show of Othello; Mr. Rae (Kean's old acquaintance) was enacting Jaffier and other characters; and a certain Mr. Huddart was announced, with the usual flourish, as Shylock, and went through the part without effect. The rival theatre was gaining ground rapidly; and the funds of old Drury were as rapidly decreasing. The committee saw nothing but thin and silent audiences; and, to make amends for this, their creditors were clamorous. Their attention was necessarily drawn to the general state of affairs. Mr. Arnold was consulted; and the result was, that in February the masters and managers of Drury Lane plucked up a bold spirit, and determined to try "the little man with the capes" from the Exeter theatre. He was sent for by Mr. Arnold, and his good fortune broken to him in the following terms:—

"Mr. Kean, you shall have an opening part. We will give Mr. Barnard to Mr. Elliston, as your substitute, and you must pay him 2*l.* a week out of your salary." Out of his "salary," therefore (which had hitherto consisted of that species of coin which noble-minded heroes in plays present so liberally to other heroes in distress), *our* hero undertook very willingly to pay Mr. Barnard. The bargain was struck, and the "substitute" ranged himself under the Olympic banners. And now a question arose as to the character in which Kean was to make his *debût*. He had at one time thought of "Leo, or the Gipsy;" but, the play being lost, he determined to try his fate in Shylock. This was opposed by the managers, and also by the committee; they proposed Richard the Third, and other parts; but Kean, apprehending (as he explained to them) that a prejudice would arise, in case his diminutive person should be

contrasted with the splendid figure of John Kemble, adhered to the Jew of Venice, saying, in reply to all their arguments,—"Shylock or nothing."

CHAPTER II.

ANNOUNCEMENT—REHEARSAL—HOW TO ENCOURAGE AN ACTOR—TRAINING FOR A CHARACTER—FIRST APPEARANCE—A SCOTCH FRIEND—A FEW WORDS ON SHYLOCK AND THE JEWS.

ON Wednesday, the 26th of January, 1814, the Drury-Lane play-bills intimated that "their Majesties' servants" would that evening perform Shakspeare's play of "The Merchant of Venice." Amongst the principal actors announced, were,—as Portia, Miss Smith; Antonio, Mr. Powell; Bassanio, Mr. Rae; Lorenzo (with songs), Mr. Phillips; Lancelot, Mr. Oxberry; Gratiano, Mr. Wrench; and "*Shylock, Mr. Kean,* from the Theatre Royal, Exeter." This was the day "big with the fate" of Kean and the acting drama.

Never was anything less propitious; the winter was in its height (the cold severe, and the snow two feet deep upon the ground); the actor himself was friendless; and he had undergone three months of want, anxiety, and discouragement. No paragraphs (those insidious prologues to a first appearance) had trumpeted his approach; no brother-actor had taken him by the hand, or cheered him up to stand his forth-coming trial; and he had not had one single rehearsal! Until the morning of the very day on which he was to make his *debût*, he had never gone through a scene with the actors who were to be fellow-labourers with him in the play. What occurred to interrupt the common custom of theatres we are not competent to say.

At last, however, the play was put in rehearsal; this was not until the morning of the 26th, the very day on which he was

to appear. In obedience to the call, Kean attended at the theatre, to walk through his part. Mr. Raymond, the stage-manager, and the several actors specified in the bill of the evening, were there. Every one was very civil, and as cold as the season. The actors at the side scenes (Kean heard of this afterwards, though he could not then distinguish anything) were liberal of their prophecies:—"He will be sure to fail." However, our hero went through the speeches of Shylock, or rather he was in the *act* of repeating them (giving some of his peculiar effects to each), when Raymond, the manager, could withhold his advice no longer. "This will *never* do, Mr. Kean," said he, with a superior smile; "it is an innovation, Sir; it is totally different from anything that has ever been done on these boards."—"Sir," returned our hero (we can imagine something of his tone here, however repressed it might have been), —"Sir, I *wish* it to be so."—"It will no

do, Mr. Kean, be assured of it," returned the manager carelessly. "Well, Sir," replied the other, "perhaps I may be wrong; but, if so, *the Public* will set me right." Finding remonstrance of no avail, Mr. Raymond left the refractory actor to perform the "Road to Ruin" his own way.

That personage left the theatre in anything but tip-toe spirits, when the rehearsal was at an end. He went home for solace, and, let us state that on that day,—he dined! This, as we have seen, was but an occasional ceremony with him. In general, he could have dispensed with this important meal, for

> ——." His palate *then* did deign
> The roughest berry on the rudest hedge:"

but *that* day he was to be supported; his courage was to be braced, and his voice strengthened, by a little generous diet. Accordingly, on his return, his wife produced before him (by the usual alchemy, we suppose, some rapid conversion of velvet or satin

into silver) a beef-steak and a pot of porter. He was not a man to reject a compliment of this sort; and he therefore sat down, and gave satisfactory proof that he had not been dismayed out of his appetite by the chilling events of the morning.

Let not the refined reader shrink too hastily from this detail of our hero's domestic performances. A dinner is a matter of moment to every man. To a man who does not dine every day it is more so; and to a player, hungry, and on the eve of his *debût*, most of all. Some people have even thought that diet may determine the intellectual character. As a vine, transplanted from the Rhingau to the banks of the Irtis, (say they) loses its quick impulse and delicate flavour; so the mind, cast down from patrician venison, or commercial turtle, to the simplicities of an Hibernian meal, shrinks and rusticates, as it were, within itself,

and draws in the reins of its too ambitious fancy. Thus, or to this effect, runs the argument. Amongst players and painters, it is well known that some have treated the question of diet like one of severe science. Fuseli, we believe, dreamed (for devils!) upon pork. Mossop (this is on record) chose his dish with his character: "Broth," said he, "for one; roast pork, for tyrants; steaks, for Measure for Measure; boiled mutton for lovers; pudding for Tancred," &c.—He was a person, either of subtler taste or more delicate organisation than our hero; who, taking, as he did, by mistake, fare adapted for Escalus or Claudio, did, nevertheless, very well with it. It was lucky, perhaps, (being about to incorporate himself with Shylock the Jew) that he was not inveigled into the dish for "tyrants." We might have trembled for the result.

After dinner, Kean prepared for the awful

evening. His stock of 'properties' was very scanty. He tied up his wig and collar, however, and an old pair of black silk stockings, in a pocket handkerchief, thrust them into his great coat pocket, (his coat with 'the great capes,') and trudged through the snow to Drury Lane.

It was a cold and dismal evening; and when the curtain drew up, there were but few persons in the theatre. And even those few, it is presumed, were less disposed to be pleased than they would have been at a more genial season. For there is a predisposition to pleasure or otherwise on such occasions; and a portion of the praise or censure which is showered upon actors, owes its origin to the previous comfort or discomfort of the spectator. There were one or two sound critics in the house, however, and these determined — not the quantity of applause, but the quality of re-

putation which should belong to the new performer. And it is always thus. We hear, indeed, of this and that thing or person being allowed by all 'the world' to be best, —pre-eminent beyond rivalry or doubt. We hear of certain rare beauties, and exalted flavours, which are allowed excellent by "the world," — passages of Milton — deep and subtle thoughts in Shakspeare—the odour of violets—the white muscle of the haunch—the callipash and the callipee, and so forth. Alas! "the world" has nothing to do with these high and weighty matters. All is determined by the critics,—by the half a dozen men of taste and genius who support the credit of their age. The coarse palate of the public, of the multitude, cannot apprehend such delicacies. It admits them, indeed; and they become, in time, truths,—common places; not because they are generally felt, but because, by a fine providence, the many

and the ignorant admit and follow, in instinctive obedience, the lessons of the few and the wise.

When Kean first entered upon the stage, that evening, the spectators saw that something decisive (good or bad) was about to happen. His quick, flashing, and intelligent eye, and his quiet resolute bearing, denoted a sure result,—Cæsar, or nothing. "I could scarcely draw my breath," said Dr. Drury to Kean on the following day, "when you first came upon the stage. But directly you took your position, and leaned upon your cane, I saw that all was right." Kean was received with the usual encouraging plaudits bestowed on a new actor; and he acknowledged them with a bow eminently graceful. This was so far in his favour. His audience now took notice of him, and saw a figure and countenance that Titian would have been pleased to paint. His thin, dark face, full of mean-

ing, and taking, at every turn, a sinister or vigilant expression, was just adapted to the ascetic and revengeful Shylock, He spoke,— "Three thousand ducats? well!" and you were satisfied that there would be no failure. As he proceeded, the feeling of the audience went altogether with him. His reply to Bassanio (who says, Be assured you may take his bond,) "I *will* be assured I may," obtained applause; and his fine retort on Antonio, (which shames, or ought to cast shame on the Christian merchant,)

> "*Fair Sir, you spat on me on Wednesday last;*
> *You spurned me such a day; another time*
> *You called me—dog; and for these courtesies*
> *I'll lend you thus much monies—*"

was received with acclamations. At one time, it was feared that his voice would fail, and the manager hurried after him with a glass of negus, as a restorative; but it was an idle apprehension. He went

on, still gaining ground, until he arrived at the scene with Salarino, where those fierce and unanswerable interrogations on behalf of the Jew ("Hath not a Jew eyes," &c.) are forced from him: when, knitting himself up, he gave them forth with terrible energy, and drew down a thunder of applause. And in this way he went on, victorious, to the end; gathering glory after glory, shout after shout, till the curtain fell. Nothing like that acting,—nothing like that applause, had, for many previous years, resounded within the walls of ancient or modern Drury. It was a new era. The actor and the theatre were both poor, and each, separately, were unable to rise. But together,—like certain salts and other substances, which are formidable only in conjunction,—they were competent to encounter any thing. That day was golden-lettered in theatrical annals. The audience went home wondering and delighted; the

committee more than content; the actor himself triumphant:—

"That day he overcame the Nervii *!"

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* The following account of Kean's first appearance and rapid good fortune, purports to be from the pen of an eye-witness: we believe that it was written by a relative of Mr. Nation. We copy it from a respectable publication. "He selected Shylock for his first appearance, by the advice of Mr. Nation" [*this is an error*], "for the merits of his Richard were then unknown; indeed, he had few opportunities of appearing in Shakspeare in the country. I went with a party of sixteen. The pit was not more than two-thirds full; but the overflow from Covent Garden, where a new and popular opera was performing, soon filled the house respectably. The first scene went off flatly; but he made a great impression in the scene with Tubal, in the third act; and his triumph was complete in the trial-scene. I went afterwards behind the scenes to congratulate him. I found him in a small dressing-room, in the most remote part of the house, occupying it in common with two or three of the second-rate actors, and no friend near him: it was a great contrast to the scene I shortly afterwards witnessed on his first appearance in Othello, when his dressing-room was filled with the first wits of the day, who formed a semicircle around him, whilst he was contemplating his new costume in a cheval glass,

When the play was over, Mr. Pope and Mr. Powell followed their new colleague to

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and practising attitudes. I remember Reynolds raising an extended palm, and saying, 'Hush! do not disturb him!'

"The committee presented him with fifty guineas after his performance of Shylock, and one hundred after that of Richard. Lord Essex gave him a very handsome sword; and his society was eagerly courted by persons of the highest rank. During his first season he used to play Othello and Iago alternately. I think his Iago was the most perfect of all his performances.

"I called upon Mrs. Kean when his benefit was announced. I do not exaggerate when I say, that money was lying about the room in all directions; the present Mr. C. Kean, then a fine little boy with rich curling hair, was playing with some score of guineas (then a rare coin) on the floor; bank notes were in heaps on the mantel-piece, table, and sofa; and poor Mrs. K. was quite bewildered with plans of the house and applications. I remember three ladies being introduced, who approached Mrs. K. as if she were a divinity. Little Charles had deserted his guineas, and mounted himself on a large wooden horse with stirrups. 'What a sweet child!' they whispered, and eyed him as if he had been a young prince.—I think the receipts of that benefit amounted to 1150*l.*"

his dressing-room, to congratulate him, after their respective fashions, on his success. "You have made a hit to-night, sir," observed the first. The other, more candid, said, "You have done wonders, sir; you have saved the theatre." Mr. Arnold also sent for him to the manager's room:—"You have exceeded our expectations, sir," said he; "this play will be repeated next Wednesday."

Let us now go back to the tragedian's wife, whom we left at the lodgings in Cecil Street.

During the hours of performance, she had been waiting the result at home. It may be imagined how much anxiety must have prevailed, when not only the fame of her husband, but the very existence of himself and family hung on the event. For, to be damned in London is to be damned in the country; and the actor who once earned his humble crust in the provinces, whilst *un*tried

at the fastidious bar of the metropolis, is by no means sure of regaining his old position, if, on *being* tried, he should be found wanting. The hours, therefore, passed gloomily enough. At last, about half-past ten o'clock, the Misses Williams, and also Mr. Hewan and Mr. Watts (two artists who lodged in the house), returned. The first comer was Mr. Hewan, in reply to whose knock, Mrs. Kean ran down to the door, and, in breathless haste, demanded to know their fate. The good-natured artist answered her anxious interrogation in the kindest and broadest Scotch (which we regret being obliged to translate after our poor English fashion):—"Oh! Mistress Kean! you need have nothing to fear. He's the greatest little man that has appeared since the time of Garrick. I can't tell you all—but, by St. Andrew, in that long speech, where he gives it to Antonio, 'You spate upon me, and for that I must lend

you so much money;'—Oh! his eye—as he turned it up towards the merchant, at the end—said (as plainly as I speak it now), 'There! take *that* in your pipe, and smoke it.'"—This was great news. Presently came in Mr. Watts, who was equally delighted. He did not enter into detail, but spoke particularly as to the fine expression of Kean's face, adding, "Do you think he will sit to me for his picture? I should like to take him, in Shylock, by candlelight." [Kean afterwards sate for his portrait, which was accordingly painted, engraved, and widely circulated.] Next followed the Misses Williams, exulting in the accomplishment of their prophecies; and, finally, about eleven o'clock, arrived the hero of the night himself. He ran up stairs, wild with joy, and cried out, "Oh, Mary! my fortune's made: now you shall ride in your carriage." A mighty change had been wrought in a

brief period. Four or five hours before, he said, on quitting the house, that he wished he was going to be shot. Now, all the gloom of the morning dissipated and forgotten, he seemed to tread on air. He told his wife, indeed, that when he found the audience "going with him," he was inspirited and exalted to such a degree, that "he could not feel the stage under him." His sensations had now sunk a little,—almost to a rational level. In order, however, that every one might be a partaker of the new happiness, even the child (the present Mr. Charles Kean) was taken out of his cradle and kissed by his father, who said, "Now, my boy, you shall go to Eton." Kean had always been ambitious that his son should have an aristocratic education, and the project seemed now no longer improbable. During the remainder of the night, and, indeed, until four o'clock in the morn-

ing, Kean and his wife sate together, congratulating each other on their good fortune; he talking of what he would do, what he would play next, and forming schemes of all sorts for the future. Once, indeed, his mind was touched with a melancholy recollection; for he said, "Oh! that Howard was alive now!—but he is better where he is." With this exception, there was nothing to cast a shade over his golden dreams.

Kean repeated the character of Shylock on the 1st, and again on the 3rd of February, each time with increased success: and he deserved, in a great degree, the applause that was showered upon him. He was the best Shylock that ever trod the stage, within our recollection. There were, indeed, some defects in the performance, we think; for it was the picture of a man stung into rage, rather than the impersonation of the Spirit of

Hatred,—of long, deep, settled, unquenchable revenge. Shylock is not simply the sport of the merchant, or the martyr of Venetian tyranny; but he is *a Jew*—the member of a suffering community. He is not suddenly angry: he has grown grey under injuries. He does not merely resent his own wrongs, but the insults offered to his race. He is the high-priest of his tribe, eager to sacrifice a victim.

We confess that we sympathise somewhat with the revenge that rankled in the heart of Shylock. He was an ill-used and oppressed man. He suffered, individually, and as one of a people, on whom the world had been spitting its scorn for nearly two thousand years. That terrible tragedy, the history of the Jews, would justify any catastrophe. In England, as in Italy and other countries, hate, stripes, imprisonment, shame, and oppression of all sorts, were their portion.

They were allowed to breathe solely for the benefit of the brutal nations in whose lands they herded. They were plundered, beaten, tortured, defiled, and burned alive. They bore badges, like slaves, that men might know and scoff at them. They were thrust out from human intercourse—huddled together and shut up, like lepers or breeders of the plague. Their transits across the countries which they enriched are marked by lines of blood. They have suffered, without enjoying the reputation of martyrs. The historians, who single out our kings and conquerors with such industry, and varnish them over with praise, till they are too bright to look upon, despise or forget the Jews. They are scarcely noticed. Edward the First, who robbed and maltreated this unhappy race, is christened "The English Justinian;" and the times during which they suffered (from *all* classes,—kings, nobles,

knights, and people), when might was right, and the strong trampled the weak into the dust, are distinguished by the title of "The Heroic Ages!" If the purpose of history be to magnify mere courage in "the Great;" to make that which is conspicuous by accident more conspicuous by design; to exalt the land we live in, right or wrong; to detail our valour, and other virtues, and to conceal the vices that thrive amongst ourselves, and our common brutality to strangers; why, the end is sufficiently accomplished. But, if its object be to show the real conduct of *a Nation*, in every stage and vicissitude; in barbarism and civilisation, in prosperity and decay; to show what "the Many" did; how they fared and fought, endured and resisted; to show their growing genius, their improving philosophy, their prejudices, their tolerance, their courage, moral as well as physical; tracing, in effect, their deeds and

character, from time to time, and the results, good and bad, of all these upon the country; *then* we think that a full and impartial history yet remains to be written, for the edification of men.

CHAPTER III.

PROSPECT OF BETTER TIMES—FIRST APPEARANCE IN RICHARD THE THIRD—A SICK INTERVAL—CRIBB AND BELCHER—A RISING REPUTATION, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES—FIRST APPEARANCE AS HAMLET—THE AUTHOR'S IDEAS OF THE PRINCE OF DENMARK—MRS. GARRICK—OUR HERO IN HIGH COMPANY.

THE town was now busy with our hero's name, and the theatre, lately so deserted, began to fill with spectators. On his first night, 164*l.* only were paid at the doors; but on his second night, 325*l.* were received. After his third performance of Shylock, Mr. Whitbread invited him to breakfast, in order that the agreement between the theatre and its new recruit might be concluded. Kean attended accordingly, and signed the paper, by which he was to receive, during three

years, a salary of eight, nine, and ten pounds per week. These, it may be remembered, were the terms agreed upon between him and Mr. Arnold. Immediately after the contract was signed, Mr. Whitbread took it up, tore it to pieces in the tragedian's presence, and presented him with the sketch of a fresh agreement, by which the Drury Lane Committee liberally bound themselves to pay him a weekly salary of 20*l.* He was freed, moreover, from any obligation to pay the 2*l.* per week to Mr. Barnard. In fact, that sum had never been (and never was) demanded from him. We think that this was a wise as well as generous policy, on the part of the theatre.

After playing Shylock six times, it was thought prudent that he should show the public what he could do with Richard the Third. This was the character in which Garrick took the town by storm, overturning

Quin and the old superstition, and fixing (for ever, as it was then thought) the true religion.

"It was not heresy, but *Reformation.*"

Kean prepared himself for the part; but, notwithstanding his former success, he was again full of apprehensions. He had chosen Shylock, because the loose Oriental dress, and the age generally attributed to the character, prevented the necessity of his exhibiting his figure to the audience. He was far more afraid of being contrasted with John Kemble in this respect, than in the qualities of his acting. At the same time, he was sensible that he had a more arduous part to play than heretofore; for he had not only the difficulties of the character of Richard (far beyond those of Shylock) to conquer, but he had also to do justice to his now rising reputation. It was

necessary to act even better than heretofore, in order to satisfy the public.

All these considerations threw him into a state of pitiable anxiety. He lost his spirits; he lost his voice. The twelfth of February arrived (the day whereon he was to appear), and he was deficient in common energy. "I am so frightened," said he, "that my acting will be almost dumb-show to-night." Nevertheless, the success of his Richard was beyond all calculation. It was so new, so startling, so ingenious in itself, and so decisive in its effects, that his reputation became extended a hundred fold. He did not, however, increase his fame without vast exertions. After the performance he was so exhausted, and in fact so ill, that it was deemed advisable to suspend his performances for a week. During this interval, his door was besieged by visiters. Compliments, inquiries, condolences, poured

in upon him. The Drury Lane Committee (now sensible of their prize) sent Sir Henry Halford to him. Mr. Whitbread accompanied the physician; and the patient was ordered to inhale hot water, to take shower baths, and a dozen other remedies; and above all, he was entreated to take care of a life so precious to the public, and to—the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane.

His performance of Richard was vigorous, brilliant, and original. If there were, as has been objected, rather too many starts and salient points in it, it is only saying that it was, like all other things, not absolutely perfect. Had Garrick lived in an age as highly critical as this, we should not, we suspect, have had mere eulogies on his acting transmitted to us. We should have had reasons for everything. We should have heard of fault after fault, beauty after beauty. But the times were different. Garrick's

admirers (satisfied that the good predominated) were content with his general excellence; and, grateful for the pleasure which he afforded them, they requited him with a large and almost unalloyed measure of praise. Kean had to stand a more fiery trial; and if he did not come out altogether unscathed, he forced from almost all who saw him (for certain individual beauties in his performance) the most unqualified applause. In our opinion, he was superior, beyond a comparison, to both Cooke and Kemble in the part of Richard the Third. He was neither coarse, which is a vulgar error, nor monotonous, which is a fatal fault. He wanted, perhaps, dignity, or that high bearing which we (in our simplicity) are in the habit of ascribing to princes. And yet, Richard had less of the prince than of the man. He was a person of great power and decision, brave, quick, impetuous, vindictive, ambitious, and intellectual; and all these

qualities Kean represented, and represented well. In the courtship with Lady Anne, indeed, we think (contrary, perhaps, to the better opinion) that his hypocrisy was too obvious. His manner did not carry the appearance of deception to any one of the spectators; and we see no reason why it should have deceived his victim. But this was a trifle, in comparison with the rest of his performance, which, it may be said, was admirable throughout. We never indeed saw the active and intelligent Richard represented properly before he assumed the part. We lay less stress than other persons on certain bright points in his acting. We prefer commending the *general* unabated, unequalled spirit, that he threw into the character. It was not only his "Good night" to his friends before the battle, or his combat and death scene, (which were magnificent); but all the life and business of the play were given in a

way that no other actor, in our recollection, ever equalled. We have been told that some writer of memoirs, who appears to have been fonder of "dignity" than of nature, says, after witnessing the terrible death-scene in Richard, "I left Kean, acting Cribb and Belcher!" The reader will smile when he hears that the fight and death in in Richard, particularly where Kean used to strike at his adversary after having lost his sword (the action which the writer objects to), were actually COPIED from the death of an officer, who fell in one of the battles of Spain! So much for the criticism of those who are perpetually complaining of "want of dignity." These persons would hide Nature herself in ermine, and thrust a lay figure before us, and demand our sympathy, or bid us fall down and worship it.

On the 19th of February, (the week being then at an end), Kean resumed the character

of Richard, and he played it again on the 20th and the 24th. But, what attraction was there not in him now! On the last-mentioned evening, almost six hundred pounds were paid at the doors of the theatre! There were no more beggarly accounts of empty boxes! Every cranny in the house was filled. From the floor to the ceiling, there was not a vacant spot. The pit doors were surrounded soon after mid-day. The pit itself held in its huge embraces more than its allotted number of the curious. The people themselves, one might imagine, one and all, had "reduced their shapes immense." Even those lusty rogues who, to our pain and sorrow, so often thrust their vastness into the pit, and seem

"In bigness to surpass earth's giant sons!"

shrank and grew human—less than human,

—— "Like that pygmean race
Beyond the Indian mount,"

accommodating themselves, with graceful dexterity, to the exigencies of the times.

It was on the night of our hero's first playing Richard, that Bannister ("Jack Bannister," famous for his good acting and good-nature,) achieved his memorable piece of wit. "This is really a wonderful man," said Mr. V. "Yes," replied Mr. Z. insidiously, "I understand that he is an admirable *harlequin*." "That I am certain of," retorted Bannister; "for he has jumped over all our heads."—Other compliments, of a more sterling nature (yet we do not wish to undervalue Jack Bannister's joke) were paid to our tragedian about this time. He received from an anonymous correspondent, (but who, if we have any skill in the comparison of writings, is a nobleman of high rank and princely munificence,) a bank note of 100*l*. Mr. Whitbread called on him one morning, took his little boy on his knee,

and, after stating how sensible he was of Kean's services, put a draft for 50*l.* into the child's hand. The Duchess of St. Albans also (then Miss Mellon, or Mrs. Coutts) visited him, and tendered him, amongst various pleasant compliments, fifty pounds. The Drury-Lane Committee (this, however, was some time afterwards) presented him with 500*l.*; and four of the shareholders (Lord Essex, Mr. Ellice, Mr. Chandos Leigh, and, we believe, Mr. Scrope Davies) gave him each a share in the theatre. He was now evidently on the high road to fortune.

On the 12th of March, Kean appeared, for the first time in London, as *Hamlet.* Miss Smith (now Mrs. Bartley) was the Ophelia; Dowton, Polonius; Bannister, the grave-digger; and Raymond, the Ghost. The curiosity of the public, it seemed, had suffered no abatement. The treasury of the theatre received 660*l.* that evening. But the

opinion of the critics differed as to the merit of the performance. And yet, there were as fine ideas originated by our actor in Hamlet, as in any other of his characters. Less vigorous and rapid in his effects than in Richard (as was to be expected), and less intense and overpowering than in Othello; he nevertheless yielded himself as completely to the sentiment of the part,—to its contemplative indolence, its sudden impulses, its almost fantastic melancholy. He did not, in his appearance indeed, precisely answer our previous notions of Hamlet; because, by a strange error, we had been accustomed to associate with the character, a grave, noble, attenuated figure,—the ideal personification of grief; whereas our son "is fat, and scant of breath." However this might have been, Kean represented ably the better part of the princely Dane,—the intellectual part. We beheld, or rather felt, the real sadness of his soul, the

nobility of his nature, his filial affection, his spirit lost in starry contemplation,—in abstraction 'from the things that be.' We saw "the rapt soul sitting in the eyes." And this is surely more satisfactory, than to look upon the mere physical sufferings and tragic distortions with which we are so often treated on the stage, and which convert the theatre into a hospital, and our sympathies (which should rarely, if ever, exceed the limits of pleasure) into actual and unprofitable pain.

The character of Hamlet has been much discussed; and critics have bewildered themselves in attemping to make it compact, to reconcile one event with another, and to assign a reason for every individual occurrence. And this would have been well, had they been dealing with any other dramatist: for it is the vice of dramatists and biographers in general, to square their characters so as to suit a certain preconceived idea of their

own. They resolve that their personages shall be guided by certain motives, or perform certain actions, because it accords with their own idea of "the class" (the prince or the peasant, the tyrant or the lover) which their hero is called upon to represent. A lover must be all passion, a lawyer all chicanery, a tyrant all cruelty and caprice. Shakspeare alone was wiser than all others, and allowed whomsoever he created to wander according to their own will. He did not tyrannise over them. Hamlet was a prince, but he was not (like Racine's and Voltaire's heroes) necessarily grandiloquent. He was a lover, but he was not absorbed by love. He was learned and wise in speculations; but in deeds he was not consequently wise. Refined and thoughtful he was in the highest degree. He lets fall more maxims than any other of Shakspeare's characters. If Lear utters grander things, Hamlet is the wiser man. He is book-wise—

wise by dint of reading and solitary thinking. Hamlet has the wisdom of a philosopher, Richard of a man of the world, Falstaff of a man of the town, Iago of the incarnation of evil. We have not so much sympathy with the actions of Hamlet, as with those of many others. We do not go hand in hand with him when he acts; but we respond to his *reflections*, because they contain a true picture of the waywardness of the human mind.

Hamlet is a gentleman and a prince. The accident of birth has made him the last; education, habit, and his own gentle nature have raised him into the former. He is free from envy and vanity, having had no competitor—no equal. He is not soured by disappointments, nor perplexed by intrigues, his life having been passed among books. He knows his position, and does not require to

render himself higher by lofty words. That is the mistake of vulgar dramatists. It is Pistol to whom big words belong. Condescension and affability are the pleasures of princes. The smiles which they scatter produce flowers, which return a perfume to their senses. They do not soar, there being nothing above them; but lower themselves graciously to the crowd below.

Nothing can be more prepossessing than our first acquaintance with Hamlet; nothing can be more complete than his whole story. Why do we strive to make him "the representative of a class," or to assign reasons for everything he does, when he acts evidently without premeditation? Is not one of the objects of the play to write down the history of human weakness and inconsistency; to show how a man, meditative, retired, abstracted, would act when forced into the

busy scenes of common existence? Were it not for his sensibility, Hamlet would be a spirit; for

"His soul was like a star and dwelt apart."

As it is, he is but the picture of an infirm philosopher, who has gathered great knowledge from books, but none from experience. His theories have not been reduced to practice. He is restless and quick in thought, indolent in action. His vigour is diffused and exhausted in speculations: he has none left for the purposes of daily life. He is thrown out of his sphere (which is all the world of thought) by the fierce circumstances of the times, and is called upon to act without preparation. He does not know what to do. He therefore does things weak, violent, and injudicious, and consummates all with his death. As we have said, Hamlet is a man evidently irresolute and infirm of pur-

pose. And to show what an infirm being of this sort would do or leave undone; to show his inertness in deeds and his mental activity, his tender and fierce impulses, his indecision and unfitness for ordinary life;—these things seem to us to be the scope of the play, and to constitute its moral. In the education of a prince, one book which he should be required to study, should be the tragedy of Hamlet the Dane.

Mrs. Garrick, who went to the theatre every night of Kean's performance, was not, it seems, entirely satisfied with his personification of Hamlet. She wrote to him, and requested that he would call on her. He went, and she placed him in her husband's chair. It was the only chair that she would allow him to sit in, and she said that she would keep it solely for him. At the same time, she insisted that in the closet scene our tragedian was "too tame,"—that is to say, he was tamer

than her husband. She made him act it over again with her, and play it in her "husband's manner." He was tired to death of this instruction at second-hand, (well he might be), but did not altogether disregard it. In fact, he acted the closet scene afterwards in "Garrick's manner," and never satisfied himself, or others. He had always considered Hamlet to be his best part; he had studied it more than any other, and was outrageous at having been coaxed into playing it in a manner contrary to his judgment.

When Easter arrived, and the actor's holidays commenced, Kean and his wife went down by invitation to spend a day or two with Mr. Pascoe Grenfell, at Taplow. Previously to starting, he desired his wife to be cautious with respect to her dress, which he requested might be as unornamented as possible; "for otherwise," said he, "they will only account it so much stage finery." It is

to be observed that he was always anxious, and even uncomfortable, in his intercourse with persons of superior rank. Whether he went to Mr. Whitbread's, to Mr. Grenfell's, or to Cashiobury, it was all the same. Indeed his discomfort was so apparent, that Mr. Whitbread said to his wife, "We don't invite him, because it seems so painful to him." Kean himself accounted for his distaste for high company in a way sufficiently satisfactory. "I don't understand them," said he, "when they talk about speeches in parliament and so forth, and their conversation is about little else; and when they talk about acting, it is *such* nonsense! I would rather dine at home, or go with some of my friends up the river." When he was more candid, he would confess that he was afraid of betraying ignorance. "I can act my characters without fear of committing myself; but I can't sit down at a lord's table with

comfort, when they expect every word that comes out of my mouth to be wonderful."

His opinions of high and low life seem to have been much the same. "Neither of them are judges of acting," said he (his only method of measuring a man's intellect); "the only critics worth a thought are doctors, lawyers, artists, and literary men."

CHAPTER IV.

APPEARS AS OTHELLO—AS IAGO—CRITICISM ON THE MOOR AND HIS ANCIENT—KEAN'S INDUSTRY—THE ENTERTAINMENT OF PUNCH—EXTRAVAGANZAS—ACTS LUKE FOR HIS BENEFIT—END OF THE FIRST SEASON IN LONDON—RETURN OF THE GOLDEN AGE.

ON the 5th of May, after a month's previous announcements, Kean appeared for the first time in the character of Othello; the part of Iago was given to Pope, and Desdemona to Miss Smith. And on the 7th of May, our hero performed, also for the first time, the part of Iago; the dress of Othello being filled upon that occasion by the body of a certain now forgotten Mr. Sowerby. Each of these performances produced large houses, and Kean continued playing the two charac-

ters alternately (amongst other parts) during the remainder of the season. When he performed Othello, Pope was, we believe, invariably the Iago: but when he filled the part of Iago, he was linked successively to several very serious Othellos. At one time, he had the aforesaid Sowerby for the Moor; at another Pope; then followed Rae; and finally, in ten times the common pomp of tragedy, the Olympic manager, Elliston. Is it to be wondered that our hero looked startling and resplendent by the side of such lights as these?

Kean's Iago was originally a very ingenious, if not a complete piece of acting. He took for his model a person still alive; but after the first night or two, he discontinued the manner which he had adopted at the outset, and eventually permitted his Iago to degenerate into a second-rate performance Whether the dull and cloudy Othellos with

whom he was associated, absorbed or extinguished all the brilliancy which at first surrounded his "Ancient," or whether he himself preferred at all times to act the Moor, is not quite clear; but we believe the latter to have been the cause.

Kean's Iago was entirely different from that of any preceding actor. We saw no longer the undisguised, common-place assassin and slanderer, who had hitherto strutted and scowled upon the stage; but a jocund, elastic villain, who murdered reputations with a smile, and whose vivacity and intelligence formed a cloak far more impervious to suspicion, than the vulgar cut-throat aspect which usually disgraces the part, and renders the jealousy of Othello so eminently ridiculous. We are not sure, however, but that Kean was even *too* lightsome in his manner; for there is great weight of metal in our Ancient. His wit is solid, as well as

sharp. His character indeed is almost purely intellectual. There is little, if any, passion in it. Even the efforts which he makes to rise in the world proceed rather from the restlessness of an over-active mind, than from the impulses of an ordinary ambition. He is freer from the infirmities of humanity than any other of Shakspeare's characters. He is not rash, nor irritable, vain, weak, nor compassionate. His allusions to the fine nature of Othello are not enlivened by any sympathy. They are candid, but made in the spirit of indifference:—

> "The Moor—howbeit I endure him not—
> Is of a constant, loving, noble nature."

He sees the noble qualities of the Moor, and makes no effort to acknowledge them; in fact, he looks upon his confiding nature with some contempt—

> "He thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
> And will as tenderly be led by the nose," &c.

Othello's bravery and skill in war he may have respected; but his kindness of heart and his code of morals must have appeared laughable enough in the Machiavelian eyes of the selfish and sceptical Iago. This latter accomplished person reminds us perpetually, by his activity, his intelligence, and indifference to human life, of our own royal murderer, Richard the Third. The difference between him and Richard is, that Richard is ambitious, whilst he is selfish. Richard's atrocities arise from ambition and personal feeling, whilst his are owing to an utter want of feeling and principle altogether. One has the blood of a tiger, and the other that of a snake; but the results are equal.

Iago is one of those restless spirits to whom idleness is death. He is always plotting, always speculating, always ready to invent or achieve a catastrophe. He is a gambler, who plays not with counters but

men. From Roderigo up to "the Moor," all are puppets in his hands. He moves them about as he would the pawns upon a chess-board; with no more care for the consequence as regards them, and with something like indifference even as it respects himself. All that he heeds is success; and whether he himself be crushed or not, under the ruin which his stratagems are about to cause, is a matter of secondary import.

He must have sprung from a humble origin. All his sentiments betray the lowliness of his birth. Not that they are in themselves so base, as that they are hostile to all above him. In a school of poverty and hard discipline he has learned to become a "good hater," jealous of others, and sceptical of good. All men are or have been his rivals. He feels that he is shrewd, witty, active, wary, and dextrous, yet he sees his contemporaries winning the race before him. He resolves there-

fore, if he cannot overtake them in their course, at least to mar the glory of their triumph. Michael Cassio ("an arithmetician," forsooth!) has got the prize, for which he bled at Rhodes and at Cyprus; the fool Roderigo is richer than he; Othello is more powerful and more honoured. But wait! all will be even soon. A little while he lets them go on, laughing over their graves; till at last, the time being ripe, he tumbles them headlong in, himself amongst the rest, a fierce, resolute, and scarcely unwilling martyr, in the tragedy which his genius has accomplished.

In regard to Kean's Othello, it was surely one of the most consummate pieces of art that the stage has ever presented. The common faults of his acting,—the want of massiveness and strict preservation of character,—were not observable here. In effect, the starts and turns and sinuosities of his ordinary

style seemed to become a passion, which is itself full of unevenness and change,—whose "numbers unto nought are fixed." The fluctuation of the story, the overturn,—or rather the uncovering and anatomy of Othello's mind, are fatal to the indifferent actor. He is wrecked on so stormy a strand. But it was otherwise with Kean. He had strength and appetite for the encounter. The transits from anger to pity,—the fall,

"Deeper than ever plummet sounded,"

from love into deep despair,—the manly, tender, fiery character of the open-hearted Moor,—the hurry and violence of the scenes, which whirl us along without ceasing to the close of this wonderful drama,—were only so many opportunities of exhibiting his energies, his pathos, his variety, his resources. Let no one presume to deny the merit of Kean in this play. It has been acknowledged

by many thousand people. Their tears and sympathy, which are so many attesting witnesses to his excellence, are not to be impugned or derided by the opinion or insensibility of any small knot of men. The applause which he received was drawn from all classes,—from the busy and the idle, the learned and unlettered, the young and the old. Garrick and Mrs. Siddons drew their plaudits from the same source, and it has given to *them* imperishable fame.

The character of Othello is one of the most perfect and delicate, and on the whole, perhaps the most extraordinary that we meet with in the world of Shakspeare. Less refined than Hamlet, less imaginative than Macbeth, and less terrible and impressive than Lear, the development of his nature is, to our thinking, more complete than in either of the others. Hamlet, who at first sight may appear to be more laid open

to view, will be found to exhibit rather the amount of his own thoughts and *opinions* on abstract or indifferent subjects, than his own *character*.

Shakspeare has drawn the Moor, we may say, with great magnanimity, since he has forborne to avail himself of the common incentives, and has proceeded fearlessly and without any stimulating notes of preparation, at once to the main purpose of the play. At first view, nothing appears so hopeless as to derive a great interest from Othello. An ordinary dramatist must have utterly failed in the attempt. The combination of qualities which the Moor possesses, are precisely those which are opposed (according to all common calculation) to the results that are so clearly extracted from them. What is to be done with a man apparently of such simplicity,—an every-day character,—one who is brave, honest, tranquil, generous, confiding,

free from jealousy ("not easily jealous"), and little else? one who has moreover passed the perilous paths and romantic adventures of youth, when the passions are so easily stirred up, and carry the sympathy of the multitude with them. The period of his wooing (that great refuge of a dramatist) is over, and he comes before us, seemingly without any impediment in his way, from which we can anticipate any prodigious result. He has been moderate in his attachment; and his love, crowned with success, is a principle rather than a sentiment. It is a manifestation of his opinion,—the assent of his mind to the high deserts of his bride, and not a humour, the quality of which is determined by the ebb and flow of his blood. He loved Desdemona not for her beauty, but for her gentleness,—her virtues. She felt compassion for his toils and dangers; and he "loved her *that she did pity them.*" His love, accord-

ingly, is not like common love, which is a wilful passion, subject to all "the skiey influences," but is a tranquil contented affection, that rests sheltered and apparently secure. But there is still one point from which it is assailable, and there Shakspeare, in his infinite penetration, has struck. He saw the seed in him, the colour which "an Indian or an African sun had burned upon him;" he saw that the tranquillity of Othello arose not from temperament but education. He is the son of a burning soil, but he has been transplanted into the camp, and tamed, ever since he was seven years old—

"Since these arms of mine had seven years' pith"—

by the habits of military obedience. The Moor is a person of great energy, not showing itself in impetuous sallies, but in the grave and decisive conduct of a man accus-

tomed to command. It is only when he quits this character, and loses all controul over himself, that his African blood boils over and consumes him. It is then that his passions, hitherto kept in order, rise up in rebellion against him. As is the cause, so is the consequence: he has lost — not a phantasm, which his imagination conceived and made beautiful, but a wife unequalled, on whom his soul was set, and whom his deliberate judgment entirely approved. His admiration was not a fancy but a conviction; resting, not upon his own feverish dreams, but upon the intrinsic worth of her whom he loved so truly. All, therefore—passion, judgment, the grave and confirmed thoughts of a cautious mind, the hopes and habits of a life, which has settled down into happiness —are torn up by the roots and overset. We behold his mind utterly wrecked; and the spirit, which has never trifled or been weak-

ened by common fretfulness and impatience, now rages without check and uncontrollable.

One of the characteristic marks of Othello is his language. Shakspeare forgot nothing. Othello is exhibited not only as a soldier, an affectionate husband, and a jealous man, but as *a Moor*. As the drama proceeds, we see the Moorish blood running through and colouring everything he utters; as the red dawn flows brightening in upon the eastern sky. His words are as oriental as his dress, —ample, picturesque, and magnificent.

Kean did not, as some persons have conjectured, play at hazard. He did not throw himself passionately into his part, and trust to the impulse of the moment for success. He studied it long and anxiously; often during half the night. However occupied in the evening, whether in acting or otherwise, he would frequently begin to study when his family retired to rest, and convert his drawing-

room into a stage. Here (with a dozen candles, some on the floor, some on the table, and some on the chimney-piece and near the pier-glass) he would act scene after scene; considering the emphasis, the modulation of the verse, and the fluctuations of the character, with the greatest care. In the morning, he would perhaps rehearse a scene or two, exhibit some of his fine "effects" before his wife, and conclude by inquiring, "Do you think that will do?" And if she answered, as was generally the case, "Oh, it's beautiful!" he would go away content. Yet he would, after all, frequently reject these same effects, when he played the character in public; and, upon being asked his reason for so doing, reply, "I felt that what I did was right. Before, I was only rehearsing."

All his time, however, was not occupied in acting, nor in preparations for acting. Care sat heavily on him at those times, indeed; but

at others, he took his revenge upon care, and, according to the immemorial custom, "drown'd him in a bowl." What were the contents of this same bowl, has not always appeared. Upon one evening, however, we learn, that they consisted of punch,—an insidious liquid. He had been playing Richard or Othello, and, in addition to the fatigue of the part, found that he had also to endure the compliments of his ancient enemy, Raymond. He accordingly ordered a bowl of punch to allay them. As soon as it was placed before him, brimful and steaming, he despatched a messenger to the stage-manager, inviting him to taste it. The manager, innocent of suspicion, accepted the invitation, and followed smiling upon the heels of our hero's emissary. He sat down (the scene was in Kean's dressing-room); and, after one or two agreeable remarks, was about to assault the bowl. But the tragedian stopped

him with a prologue. He had a spice of Timon in his nature; and he recollected how that bitter Athenian had once said grace before a feast. He therefore addressed the stage manager, at the close of one of his most terrific compliments:—"Look ye, sir. Now that I'm drawing money to your treasury, you find out that I'm a fine actor. You told me, when I rehearsed Shylock, that it would be a failure. Then, I was a poor man, without a friend, and you did your best to keep me down. Now, you smother me with compliments. It's right that I should make some return. There, sir,—to the devil with your fine speeches. Take that!" And instantly, over the head, and breast, and whole sacred person of the stage-manager, went, foaming and splashing, the contents of the awful bowl. Never did Punch play so many antics before. Never did timid city gentleman, sent down by relentless doctors to dip

in the sea at Brighton, ever rise up more breathless, or pant with more genuine alarm, than the dripping Raymond. He had already suffered much, but—the bowl might follow! and he therefore prepared for a hasty retreat. Kean, however, (desirous to render him due honour,) at this moment proceeded to strip. Having ducked the manager, he thought that he was at least entitled to satisfaction; and he therefore, in the handsomest manner, offered to give it, in the shape of a fair stand-up fight. But Raymond was not accessible to this mode of argument, to this high generosity; he had not read that

> — "Fighting 's in itself an action
> That gives *both* parties satisfaction;"

on the contrary, he stood there, a living witness, to refute so pernicious a theory. He declined a "passage at arms," and made a swift and unceremonious retreat, leaving our

hero (now splitting his sides with laughter) undisputed master of the field.

Such is Kean's account of the matter. For ourselves, we do not pretend to justify such vindictive freaks. It is enough for us to relate them.

Contemporary with the foregoing anecdote, were his extravaganzas with his horse, Shylock. Shylock was a steed of high descent, and almost as unmanageable as its master. It had been presented to Kean by some patron of the drama, and the actor had tamed and tutored it into a variety of accomplishments. Nor was its excellence allowed to rust; for, although the horse was sometimes permitted to sleep all the day, yet at three or four o'clock in the morning, it was often put in requisition by the tragedian (roaring drunk), and forced up and down the steps of the theatre, till both horse and rider were tired, when they returned home, and slept

together in the stable. At other times, this unhappy Shylock, and, indeed, all the other horses of our actor (for he had several), were put to their extreme speed, and compelled to gallop along the turnpike roads during half the night, until they were bathed in foam. The equestrians (Kean and two or three others, all drunk) rode without saddles, after the fashion of Astley's. Upon one occasion it is said that the four-footed Shylock, by dint of his swiftness, enabled Kean to escape from robbers. We do not propose to trouble the reader with an enumeration of all our hero's exploits of this sort. Our poor two volumes are too small for such a purpose. It is sufficient to say, that his frolics were as unreasonable and unseasonable as drunken frolics usually are.

For his benefit on the 25th of May, Kean chose the play of "Riches" (a manufacture

of Sir James Bland Burgess out of Massinger's "City Madam"), and sustained the character of Luke. His performance of the part was effective, and in some parts very striking; but there is no necessity to detain the reader with any minute criticism upon it.

During the remainder of the season, he played alternately the several characters in which he had previously appeared in London, *viz.* Shylock, Richard, Othello, Iago, Hamlet, and Luke; and on the 16th of July, 1814, the theatre closed.

In the course of this (his first) season, Kean played sixty-eight nights.

The total amount of money received at Drury Lane Theatre, on the sixty-eight nights of his performance, was 34,642*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* (This includes a calculation of 1700*l.* only for private boxes). When he came to the theatre, the receipts averaged 212*l.* per night.

During his nights, the general average was 509*l.* 9*s.* per night * !

The largest receipt on the representation of Shylock was £531 2 0

Do.	of Richard III.	655	13	6
Do.	of Hamlet .	660	2	0
Do.	of Iago .	573	6	6
Do.	of Othello .	673	18	6

And the number of persons who visited the theatre on the sixty-eight nights of his performance, was 166,742.

The result of the calculations is, that (subject only to Kean's own salary) the theatre *cleared*, by his services *alone*, during *those* nights, upwards of TWENTY THOUSAND POUNDS !

At the close of the season, a general assem-

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* The precise amount of profit will, therefore be as follows:—

Average receipt (new).	Previous average.	Profit per night.	Nights.	Total profit.
509*l.* 9*s.*	— 212*l.*	= 297*l.* 9*s.*	× 68	= 20,226*l.* 12*s.*

bly of the proprietors was held at the Crown and Anchor, when a dividend of five per cent. was announced to the subscribers by the chairman, Mr. Whitbread, and was received with "loud cheering from all parts of the room." Mr. Whitbread took the opportunity which the occasion afforded, of passing the following high eulogium on Kean (we take the report as we find it):—

"Mr. Whitbread, after complimenting Mr. Arnold on his management, went on to explain the manner in which they were all mainly indebted to that gentleman for the accession of that incomparable performer, Mr. Kean; by whose deserved attraction, after one hundred and thirty-five nights of continued loss, their interests had been retrieved, and the season had concluded in the brilliant manner they had witnessed. The extraordinary powers of this eminent actor had, as might well be imagined, drawn forth the

criticisms of all theatrical amateurs and judges; and though there might be some few who did not agree with him (Mr. Whitbread) in regarding Mr. Kean as the most shining actor that had appeared in the theatrical hemisphere for many years, yet he was happy to find that the general opinion concurred with his own in this respect. A combination of all the qualities that were essential to form a complete actor were found to unite in one man, very rarely, indeed; and though objections might be set up to the figure of Mr. Kean, as objections had at all times, and in all ages of the world, been set up to some one or other of the qualities and proportions of every actor, yet, judging of him in all the great attributes of the art, he was one of those prodigies that occur only once or twice in a century. He had the highest respect for the talents, the erudition, the accomplishments of Mr. Kemble, who was another of

those rare instances of superior talent in the histrionic profession; and he had no desire, in speaking of Mr. Kean, to deteriorate from the merit of Mr. Kemble; but it was too much the practice of persons, in speaking of one actor, to compare him with another; and those who affected to criticise the talents of Mr. Kean most scrupulously wished always to put him in comparison with Mr. Garrick. Of that great actor he wished to speak with the most marked respect; but who, of all those who compared him with Garrick, remembered the performance of Garrick in his twenty-fifth year? They remembered him only after long study and experience in the profession had improved and matured all the faculties of his youth; and he was ready also to pay the same compliment to Mr. Kemble, that years of application and study, with an erudite mind and strong judgment, had acquired him the celebrity which he

possessed. But in judging of Mr. Kean, we must look to him as he is—not the copyist of any other—not the pupil of a school—not a mannerist, but an actor, who found all his resources in nature, who delineated his passions? only from the expression that the soul gives to the voice and features of man—not from the images that have before him been represented on the stage. It is from the wonderful truth, energy, and force with which he strikes out, and presents to the eye this natural working of the passions of the human frame, that he excites the emotions, and engages the sympathy of his spectators and auditors. It is to him, that after one hundred and thirty-five nights of continued loss and disappointment, the subscribers are indebted for the success of the season."

CHAPTER V.

A VISIT TO DUBLIN — THE SPIRIT "WHISKEY" — ACTS AT BIRMINGHAM — A TRIUMPHAL RETURN TO LONDON — SECOND SEASON — FIRST APPEARANCE AS MACBETH — COMPARISON BETWEEN KEAN AND JOHN KEMBLE — BETWEEN RICHARD THE THIRD AND MACBETH — A SPANISH CLOAK — WEST AND NORTHCOTE.

(1814, 1815). At the close of his first London season, Kean set off for Dublin. He had entered into an engagement with Mr. Jones, the Dublin manager, to act four times a week for three weeks, and to divide the profits of the House with him, after a deduction of 80*l.* for the current expenses. He opened in Richard the Third, and played all his successful characters, with even more than his former success. Thundering ap-

plause, compliments of all sorts, and the sum of 1370*l.* in money, rewarded his twelve nights' exertions. Mr. Grattan, the celebrated Irish orator, invited him to his house, and gentlemen of all creeds (in politics and religion) vied with each other in showing him attention. Nothing stood in the way of his popularity (not even his own jovialities), and he came off, by universal assent, a conqueror of all the warm hearts in Dublin.

Yet, he had nearly been vanquished at the outset. Bold spirit as he was, the spirit "Whiskey" was of a more potent order; and on his first setting foot in Ireland, its effects upon him were rapid and alarming, accustomed as he was to liquors falsely termed generous. One night, in particular, after having acted with applause at the theatre, he encountered the malevolent Whiskey, and the result of the contest was so decisive, that,

at some indefinite hour of the morning (about the time probably when

"The morning cock crew loud),"

the tragedian was brought home, by a competent number of watchmen, (our history says six), and deposited, in a state of apparent insensibility, on the floor of the hall. The actor, however, was still acting; for, as soon as his enemies were off their guard, he started up and took to flight, followed by his custodiers, who, in the true spirit of their country, began to shout "murder!" immediately that their man was restored to life. After a hot pursuit, the victim of whiskey was recaptured, and conducted to the watch-house. But when they were about to accommodate him with a lodging (free of all expense) until morning, he contrived to secrete the key of the prison door, and once more set off at full

speed. It would be difficult to describe this night-hunt; but one may imagine the mischievous player, running off at a pace of ten knots an hour, and the hounds of justice loud behind him (loud, but not swift, for we know them:

"*Our* hounds are bred out of the Irish kind;
* * * and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;
Crook-knee'd and dewlap'd, like Thessalian bulls,
Slow in pursuit, but matched in mouth like bells,
Each under each——")

One may imagine the tumult of the pursuit, the stamping of feet, the clattering of lanterns, the flourishing of shillelahs, the floating "wrap-rascals," and finally the yells and cries and denunciations (to which no English translation could do justice) of the rogues whose dexterity had been outwitted by a stranger, and whose hearts no "tinpinny" had softened. The tragedian escaped, and, as we have reason to apprehend, considered

himself aggrieved at having been seized upon, *vi et armis*, and sentenced to prison, for so simple and every-day a matter, in hospitable Ireland, as moistening his clay with the mountain dew of the country.

On his return from Dublin, he played at Bristol, at Gloucester (at mid-day), and then proceeded to Birmingham, where he acted for twelve nights, the theatre being at that time under the direction of Mr. Elliston. During his stay at this place, Mr. Knight, of the Liverpool theatre, came to witness his performances, with a view of making an engagement with him. He saw him play both Othello and Iago—the first, as usual, very finely, and the second in a tame and execrable manner; the capricious player performing as badly as possible on this occasion, with a view of not being called upon to act a character, to which he seems to have had an inveterate dislike. The result of Mr.

Knight's visit, however, was an agreement between him and Kean, which the latter afterwards fulfilled, to the entire satisfaction of the critics and play-goers of Liverpool.

On the termination of the Birmingham engagement, Kean was to commence his second season in London. His carriage, therefore, was ordered to be ready at six o'clock in the morning; so virtuous were his evening resolutions. In the mean time, however,

> ——"Between the acting of the dreadful thing
> And the first thinking on't,"

came all sorts of farewells; healths out of number; wishes and sentiments of every complexion. With each of these, it is well known that "a glass is good," however frequently it may be repeated. This night the healths had been many; and the stirrup-cup was unusually deep. At six o'clock in the morning, when the carriage, horses, and

drivers were all in readiness, the cup was not yet drained to its bottom. At eight o'clock, however, all being over, the actor arrived. The reader will guess how affairs stood, when he understands that the tragedian ordered candles to be lighted, (it being then broad day light,) and his pistols to be loaded, which he tied to his button-holes, muzzles *upwards;* and, thus equipped, he mounted the outside of the carriage, and rode, in company with his servant, almost the whole of the way to London. Arrived there, he resumed his former lodgings in Cecil Street, and prepared for a new campaign.

Kean's second season presents but few striking occurrences. It comprehends little more than a series of moderate successes, in the new parts which he undertook. These were Macbeth, Romeo, Reuben Glenroy, Richard the Second, the hero (we forget his

name) of a new tragedy called 'Ina,' Penruddock, Zanga and Abel Drugger (for his benefit), Leon, and Octavian. It is evident, from the number of characters which he undertook, that they possessed less attraction than those which he filled during his first winter in the metropolis.

He commenced the second season with Richard the Third, on the 3rd of October, 1814, and afterwards repeated it, and also his old parts of Othello, Hamlet, Iago, Luke, and Shylock; and, on the 5th of November, he appeared for the first time in Macbeth; Rae playing Macduff, and Mrs. Bartley, Lady Macbeth. To make assurance doubly sure, the tragedy was announced, "with all Matthew Locke's music, and a new overture and symphonies, by Mr. Horn." Our hero did not require this cloud of harmony, to conceal any weakness in his performance. It was, generally speaking, good; and, in two

or three parts, eminently fine. His small figure and incessant activity were the causes, perhaps, of his being generally less imposing than Mr. Kemble, who threw into the character a more than regal dignity, relieving the occasional bursts of energy by a melancholy almost amounting to repose. He was not fretful at every turn, but wore the settled aspect of a man acquainted with his doom; of one admitted to superhuman mysteries, and who bore the stamp of fate upon his soul. Kean, on the other hand, relied upon his vigour, his point, and upon the terrible effects which he knew he could produce in certain passages of the play. And thus it was that Kemble left a more complete and permanent impression upon the memory; while Kean struck the imagination, in parts, in a manner that has never been exceeded. Probably nothing finer was ever seen upon the stage, than our trage-

dian's performance of the scene that follows the murder of the venerable Duncan. It was the remorse, or rather the entire prostration of mind, which might exist in one who had committed his first great crime. There was no alarm lest detection might ensue; no attempts at self-justification or excuse; none of the subterfuges or expedients which a confirmed villain has recourse to, in order to palliate his crime or to escape discovery. But there was an utter stupefaction of the senses. He seemed blinded with the blood that he had shed; and only awakened to a recollection of what had happened, at the sight of his crimsoned hands, and the voice of his wife recalling him to manhood. His fall also upon his face, at the conclusion of the play—an idea which he took from the figure of a soldier in Sir Ralph Abercrombie's monument in St. Paul's — and even the fight (although a little too gladi-

atorial) were fine and effective. But the quieter passages were less happily given. Those beautiful lines, which fall on the ear like sweet funeral music, and raise within us thoughts of unbroken tranquillity and of endless undreaming rest, wanted some of the pathos which he threw into his farewell in Othello :—

> " Duncan is in his grave;
> After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well:
> Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,
> Malice domestic, foreign levy,—nothing
> Can touch him further!"

Never was there dirge or epitaph which spoke so touchingly as this. Yet Kean failed in the recitation; and a strain, which the saddest of the Muses might have sung, fell dull and ineffectively on the ear. The same objection might be made to his delivery of the beautiful speech which follows Seyton's information, that " the queen is dead :"

> " She should have died hereafter; " &c.

These lines were given by Mr. Kemble in his best and most impressive manner. We were not blind admirers of that celebrated actor, but we think that his performance of Macbeth was altogether excellent. His aspect and general bearing accorded with the character. He carried you with him into the melancholy regions of his fancy, and altogether seemed fit to partake of the wild and preternatural glory of the play.

It is barely possible that Kean may have fallen into the error, by no means an uncommon one, of confounding the two parts of Richard the Third and Macbeth. Parallels, as we know, have been drawn between the characters. Yet surely nothing can be more distinct than they are from each other. Richard is all activity and impulse: it is a word and a blow with him. The present, and not the future, is his object. Macbeth is inert and speculative. He does not plot

murders, but they are brought to him,—*forced* upon him, by means of infernal agency. He does not even catch greedily at the ambitious promises which the Weird Sisters hold out to him. He requires time to muse upon them. He requires the provocations of his wife (that great bad woman) to urge him to act. He is ambitious, but not in haste to wade through blood to the summit of his desires:—

"If chance will have me king, why chance may crown me,
Without my stir."

This is his feeling. And when his wife hints that Duncan "must be provided for," he postpones all consideration of the subject: "We will speak further." Richard is a natural-born ruffian, wilful, truculent, false, daring, and remorseless. He does not meditate, but plot. All his thoughts are bent on the accomplishment of his own selfish objects. Macbeth's are diffused through infinite space.

He is moreover of a philosophic spirit; tainted by ambition, indeed, and tempted to shed an old man's blood; but he has, nevertheless, touches of human feeling, and is full of speculations as to the consequences of his deeds, hereafter. Richard does not comment on or acknowledge the virtues of those he immolates. He despises Lady Anne, and kills her. Macbeth slays Duncan, "the *gracious* Duncan;" but he is sensible of his virtues: he admits that he

> "Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
> So clear in his great office, that his virtues
> Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
> The deep damnation of his taking off;"

and he is agitated by a crowd of fancies, and bears with him all the pains of an unceasing remorse:—

> "Better be with the dead,
> Whom we, to gain our place, have sent to peace,
> Than on the torture of the mind to lie
> In restless ecstacy."

Richard is of the earth, earthy. His murders are common and vulgar. They originate in his own sordid policy. He relies simply on the villainy of his agents: and when accomplished, his bloody deeds trouble him no further, except in dreams. Macbeth is more spiritual. He links himself to spirits of evil, and does what he does at their suggestion. He rests upon their help,—their promises; and never recovers from the crimes which they urge him to commit. Let us observe also, how different is the language which they utter; Richard being full of shrewd and worldly maxims; Macbeth replete with sad and profound thoughts, with wild and imaginative allusions. This fact alone is sufficient to mark the distinction between these two celebrated characters.

Kean's enemies said that he would fail altogether in Macbeth. He played it, however, twenty-four nights in the course of the

season, notwithstanding the prophecy. He was very rational in his estimate of his own performance. He thought well of the scene after the murder, and of that wherein he dies; but he admitted that Mr. Kemble, in the banquet scene, and in many other parts, gave more effect to the character.

It was about this time, that Sir George Beaumont (who was a great admirer of our hero, and thought him like Garrick) gave him a very handsome Spanish cloak. The cloak was "such as the grandees are accustomed to wear" in that solemn country, and was brought from Spain by Sir George, or by some person with whom he was acquainted. It was now destined to ornament a grandee of a new class. We wonder what the illustrious Senors Guzman or Pacheco, or those most magnificent and puissant lords the Dukes of Medina Sidonia or Medina Celi, would have thought had they seen our little

actor, with his grandee cloak tucked up, (or perhaps its sacred tail trailing in the dirt), scrambling about the streets of London by night, drinking, spouting, fighting, and committing all sorts of nameless extravagances and indecorums? The "blue blood" of the Guzmans would surely have shrunk in dismay into its ancient channels, could it have seen a strolling player trampling upon the skirts of a cloak which ought to have swung from the shoulders of a grandee of Spain; and yet

> "Alas! not all the pride of all Castile,
> Its tail could rescue from an actor's heel!"

In company with Sir George Beaumont, old Mr. West, the painter, used to come and tender his admiration to Kean. This artist was so impressed with the extreme intelligence of our tragedian's countenance, that he introduced it into one of his large pictures. West saw him first in Richard the Third, and

told him afterwards, that "he had his countenance before him during the whole of that night: he had never seen so much expression in any human face." Northcote, a far more subtle observer, said something to the same effect. Luckily he did not offer to paint our hero also *.—Not but that Northcote was not at one time a very respectable artist, and even something more perhaps, but *that* was in his "palmy days," some half century earlier. Latterly, he was simply the most entertaining old man alive; rich in anecdote, quick in perception, a shrewd observer, sometimes a profound thinker, and, finally, the most bitter historian that ever took the defects of friends or enemies under his especial protection. The absurdity or weakness of an old acquaintance blossomed out anew

* Since writing the above, it has been stated to us (not, however, in terms of certainty) that Northcote *did* attempt a portrait of Kean.

under the influence of his "charming wand." The faults of his enemies were borne abroad upon a thousand echoes, all originating in the music of his tongue. He was an intelligent and most remarkable man; and his virtues (some of which we have here recounted) merit an able and impartial historian. But we must not devote more space to the painter: our business at present is with another art.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PURCHASE OF A YACHT—OUR HERO ACTS ROMEO —REUBEN GLENROY — RICHARD THE SECOND — ZANGA—ABEL DRUGGER—KEAN'S COMEDY—MRS. GARRICK AGAIN—PRESENTS.

KEAN's triumphs had hitherto been confined to land; except when he went up the river, with some of his theatrical "tail," to invade Eel-pie Island, or make an incursion into the larder of the Red House at Battersea. But he was now resolved to tempt the other element, and to go, like "bonnie Leslie," or

—— "Like Alexander,
And spread his conquests further."

How this happened, and how his aquatic speculations terminated, may be seen from the following anecdote.

One night (or rather morning) he came home, "tipsy as usual." His wife, tired with waiting for him, had retired to bed. He walked at once up to her room, full of joyful announcements. "I am about to make us both quite happy," said he, awakening her; "I have purchased a beautiful yacht. You must be ready to go on board to-morrow. We will live on the Thames. Here his delight broke out into verse, and he began singing Moore's song—

"Come o'er the sea,
Maiden, with me!"

relieving the music, however, with, "D—n the world! we will see no one; I will have a boat to row me up to the theatre every evening, and will come back, after the play, to my home on the river. We will sail about all day. Hey! 'Come o'er the sea,' &c. Oh! it will be an enchanting life."—To all this, his wife (humouring him)

assented, and promised to be ready in the morning. This obtained for her a night's sleep. Even the tragedian addressed himself, as poets say, to his pillow, and dreamed (we will imagine, of the dolphins) until day-break.

In the morning, when the fact of our hero having 'suffered a sea-change' was forgotten, or at least seemed a phantasy,

"Proceeding from the beer-oppressed brain,"

the servant glided into the breakfast-room, and intimated that "a person" had called about "the yacht!" This stunning announcement put a period to the pleasures of breakfast. The cold fowl appeared to have a fishy flavour: the eggs tasted as though they had come from an aquatic nest: the chairs seemed to undulate,—the table to rock, beneath the unexpected intelligence. What was to be done? Kean and his wife

were rapidly approximating to a sort of sea-sickness, when "the person" entered, and explained the mystery. It seemed that Kean, on the preceding evening, finding that to be "*half*-seas over" was very delightful, rashly calculated that water was his natural element. Upon the strength of this impression, he made haste to enter into a treaty with a person who chanced to be in the room with him (a sort of Ambrose Lamela, we suppose), who cherished his new fancy; and he finally agreed to purchase "the person's" yacht, at the sum of eighty guineas. The stranger, careful of trusting implicitly to the contracts of tragedians, even when in liquor, stipulated that he should receive thirty pounds, part of the purchase-money, "down." This would clench the bargain, and make all right. Kean, eager to make sure of his prize, signed an agreement, and also a cheque on Coutts and Co. for thirty pounds (each with

a very unsteady hand,) and went home rejoicing in his yacht. In the morning, his ardour for a naval life had abated; and when his new acquaintance (the cheque-taker) arrived in Clarges Street, and produced the document, the tragedian was very desirous of rescinding the contract. There was, of course, some demur to this; but it was at last settled, that the agreement should be abandoned, and that the stranger should retain the thirty pounds. This sum was intended as a reward, we suppose, for his own wit in making a bargain; or, perhaps, as a sort of moral lesson to the tragedian, warning him never again to take to water after he was saturated with wine.

On the 2nd of January, 1815, at the request of the Drury Lane Committee, (but contrary, it should be stated, to his own desire,) Kean attempted the part of Romeo. That he produced some fine effects in the

character, may easily be imagined. It was impossible that his energy should slumber throughout an entire play, or that it should be perpetually misdirected. Accordingly, in the scene where sentence of banishment is delivered, and again in the death scene, he gave a fine representation of the impetuous and desperate anguish of the husband of Juliet. Even in the love passages, (wherein, for the most part, he failed,) we thought that we could detect, here and there, some of those accents and delicate inflexions which shadow forth the character. But otherwise, his performance seemed to us defective, in sentiment and general effect. Romeo is an impersonation of all that we imagine to belong to youthful love—its buoyancy, its extravagance, its sudden head-long confidence, its soaring hallucinations, its deep and extreme despair. It commences without fear, or judgment, or calculation. It proceeds

through all difficulties, without any guide, save its own desires, and the eyes of the divinity which it worships. It "wanders at its own sweet will;" gushing forth in thrilling sounds, like the spring which casts itself down upon a rocky and perplexed country, and finds an outlet at last. Its thoughts are all vernal, lovely, fresh, and full of music; —"silver sweet;" sometimes blushing into images of beauty; sometimes, as it were, impalpable and beyond our guess, but haunting us like a rare and subtle odour;

("Upon thy wings bring delicate perfumes!")

sometimes leaving a sweet languor in our ears, like a melody that never can be forgotten. It associates itself with all that is desirable in the world about us, all that is grateful to the senses, or pleasant to the soul. It stimulates the imagination, till out of materials at once real and fantastical,

it frames a paradise too bright for anything but hope to dwell in, but to which all that is whispered in this sweet Italian love-story, (at the midnight masque, in the garden, by moonlight, in the balcony at break of day,) seem emphaticallly to belong.

We do not know how it was, but Kean appeared not to have penetrated the sentiment of the character. He was not absorbed by the spirit of love, nor elevated by it; but seemed rather to quail under its influence, as to that of a demon whom he was unwilling to obey. He was not "light of foot," credulous, full of change, and self-abandoned; but firm, quick, shrewd, and self-possessed. He was not passionate, but impetuous; not buoyant, but firm and resolute in his bearing; whereas

"A lover should bestride the gossamer;"

so airy, so soaring, so fantastical is his compo-

sition,—such an exhalation is love, "so light is vanity!"—In short, in his personation of Romeo, Kean showed us that he was not conqueror of the whole world of tragedy and human feeling. Nevertheless, he was still master over a vast region,—a hemisphere; and that was enough for a single man.

On the 13th of February, he appeared as Reuben Glenroy; and on the 6th of March, as Richard the Second; our ancient and fat friend Elliston filling ("without stuffing" we presume) the part of the "mounting Bolingbroke." We will not trouble the reader with any criticism on Kean's performance of the first mentioned character; although there were points of great pathos and effect in it, especially in his account of what he had suffered; (telling how

——"He had been tossed
From wrong to injury")——

which was intense and overpowering. He

played the character eight or ten times in the course of his second season in London, and afterwards treated the rustics with it occasionally in his provincial tours. In regard to his performance of the second named character, we think that it was not a true portrait of the weak and melancholy Richard. This King, who disappointed all expectations,—who dishonoured the bold blood from which he sprung, and belied the promises of his own youth,—who was successively the tool of De Spenser and Gaveston, and the victim of his wife and the ambitious Bolingbroke, was not in all respects, we think, duly represented by our hero. The grandson of Edward the Third was not fierce nor impetuous, but weak and irritable, and in his downfal utterly prostrate in spirit. We did not recognise these qualities in the acting of Mr. Kean, who was almost as fiery and energetic as he used to be in Richard the Third. He threw

out bright sparks and flashes of genius; (as in the scene with Bolingbroke and Northumberland, where the catalogue of his "grievous crimes" is presented to him;) but they did not irradiate the whole character.

Mrs. Wilmot's tragedy of "Ina" was performed for the first and only time on the 22nd of April. Kean (who predicted its failure) filled the part of the hero; but from the dissatisfaction of the authoress on some point, she was induced to withdraw the play altogether, after the first night. We were not present at the representation of the tragedy, and we are, therefore, unable to speak of our tragedian's merits on this occasion. Neither does Kean's Penruddock, (which he played on the 29th of the same month) require any especial mention. It was clearly not suited to his powers, and was, in all probability, undertaken at the instigation of the Committee.

On the 24th of May (for his benefit) he appeared for the first time in Zanga. Although we did not see him on that particular night, we witnessed his performance of the part, more than once afterwards, and can testify to its excellence. The character of Zanga, which is a sort of exaggeration of Iago, does not afford many opportunities for the actor. It is a part without variety or relief. To a person who does not discriminate nicely, and who (intimate only with the prompter's book and the theatre) cannot see the many springs, upon which the human character is so nicely balanced, the part of the vindictive Zanga is well enough adapted. But Kean derived his learning from a greater volume, and was accustomed to brace himself up to the incomparable characters of Shakspeare. He did not see much in Zanga, beyond the one general hue of the character. He was, it is true, one of "the children of

the sun;" but his fiery qualities in the Revenge, are exhausted, for the most part, in large and solemn declamation. There are, however, a few passages, such as, "I knew you could not bear it,"—"Then lose her," and, "So is my revenge,"—where the performer may produce particular effects; and in all these Kean was eminently successful. But his grand blow was in the discovery of himself, and all that he had done, to Alonzo. "*Know then*—'TWAS I." Here the effect was appalling, beyond anything that we ever witnessed. Rae, who played Alonzo, seemed to wither and shrink into half his size. It is a positive fact, that he appeared less than Kean in this overpowering scene; although he was considerably the larger man. As we ourselves contemplated the dark and exulting Moor standing over his victim, with his flashing eyes and arms thrown upwards (as though he would lay open his very heart to view), we

thought that we never beheld anything so like the 'archangel ruined.' We were recalling to mind the line descriptive of the "sail-broad vans" of the great spirit of Milton, when our neighbour in the pit exclaimed to his companion, "By G—! he looks like the devil." This coincidence of ideas is in itself evidence, we think, in favour of Kean's excellence in this play.

His Abel Drugger, though it has met with applause from some critics, was, we think, but an indifferent performance. Humour was clearly not our hero's forte. He had neither Wrench's humour, which was familiar; nor Liston's, which was easy; nor Emery's, which was sturdy; nor Knight's, which was rustic; nor Dowton's, which was earnest; nor Charles Kemble's, which was buoyant and sarcastic; nor Munden's, which was broad; nor Farren's, which was (and we hope is) penetrating, and almost all that is good

besides. In short, he had no comic humour, properly so called; for his best points were scarcely more than midway between comedy and tragedy. People laughed (a little) to see the great tragic actor put off his frowns and strength, and condescend unto smiles. But Comedy does not consist of a vacant countenance or laxity of limb. It requires careful study and vigorous acting; and these things our hero judiciously reserved for his own peculiar tasks. Even Mrs. Garrick did not think him like her "dear David," in Abel Drugger. On the contrary, she advised him to lay aside the character without loss of time. He could "not play it," she said; and then she said that her husband "used to play it very finely." We apprehend that it was not simply the advice of this female centurion that determined Kean to resign the honours of farce, but a shrewd suspicion of his own incompetency. "Vaulting ambi-

tion" jumps too far at times; and it did so in this instance. He did not abandon Abel without a retort, however; for after encountering the old Lady's candour, as we have stated, he inquired if her husband could sing. She replied, "No—David could not sing." "Well, then," replied he, "I have one advantage over him, at least; for I—*can*." It should be mentioned here that Mrs. Garrick — though sufficiently tedious in her criticism, without doubt—was very attentive and friendly towards Kean and his family. She visited him very frequently (often twice a week); gave him Garrick's stage jewels, and, throughout every summer of her life, supplied him regularly with fruit, from the gardens at Hampton Court.

Kean was overwhelmed with presents during the period of his successful career; many persons testifying their admiration of his talents in that generous fashion. Wroughton

gave him a beautiful tippet, of point lace, which had once belonged to Garrick, and in which that great actor used to be killed very often, and with great applause, on the celebrated field of Bosworth. Sir George Beaumont, besides the immortal Spanish cloak, gave him a picture of Garrick in Abel Drugger. (Was this a delicate satire of the excellent Baronet?) Lord Byron, after witnessing his performance of Richard the Third, presented him with a gold box, having a boar-hunt on the top, wrought in mosaic. This was of Italian workmanship, and was presented to Kean by Mr. Merivale, to whom Kean's family were indebted for many friendly attentions, and from whom the imprudent and incorrigible player received advice (pressed on him in the kindest manner), which, had he adopted it, would have saved him from a host of evils. The tragedian took the boar for his crest; not because of the boar-hunt, but

because it was the ensign of our third Richard. It is seldom that a crest has been so well or so gallantly earned.

After his performance of Othello, Lord Byron also gave him a sword; not

"A sword of Spain, the ice-brook's temper,"

but having a Damascus blade; and after his success in Sir Giles Overreach, another. A vase was moreover presented to him (this also was a suggestion of Lord Byron) by the united Company of Performers at Drury Lane*; every actor of merit or generosity subscribing to it. And, finally, Sir Edward Tucker gave him—a lion!

At this period Kean resided in Clarges Street, where he had taken Lady Rycroft's house. His time was occupied as heretofore; except that, to his former amusements, he added that of educating the lion! Unfortu-

* See the Notes to this volume, for an account of this transaction.

nately, the animal died before it had made any progress that could be boasted of. During its life, however, Kean and his new friend were much together. Sometimes the actor was in the lion's den; sometimes the lion was in the actor's drawing-room; in which latter case, it amused the tragedian (who was fond of simple pleasures) to allure his acquaintance into the room, and set them face to face with the beast. This unfeeling trick, which might have proved fatal to the intellects of timid persons, was happily never attended with bad effects. The lion (an American one) was of an indolent and docile nature. Had he had African blood in his veins, our actor would scarcely have ventured to cultivate so strict a friendship with him.

On the 20th of June Kean made his first appearance as *Leon* in "Rule a Wife and have a Wife," and acquitted himself well on the whole; and on the 4th of

July he played *Octavian* in "The Mountaineers," with a moderate degree of credit; and with this character his second season terminated.

CHAPTER VII.

THIRD SEASON—THE HONEY-MOON—THE MERCHANT OF BRUGES—A NEW WAY TO PAY OLD DEBTS—KEAN'S SIR GILES OVERREACH—THE REBELLION OF THE PIT—THE DUKE OF MILAN—AN ABSENTEE—HIS APOLOGY—THE DEPTFORD TRAGEDY—PRIVATE THEATRICALS—VISITS TO GREAT PERSONS—BERTRAM—KITELY—END OF THE SEASON.

(1815, 1816.) Kean commenced his third London season with his favourite part of Richard the Third; and afterwards repeated others of his successful characters. In the early part of December (1815) he performed, for the first time, the *Duke Aranza* in "the Honey-Moon;" and, about the middle of the same month, made his appearance in a play, called "The Merchant of Bruges," which was in fact an alteration of Beaumont and Fletcher's Comedy of "The Beggar's Bush."

There is nothing to stop us in these things beyond the mere enumeration of the facts; unless it be the criticism which was made on his performance in the Honey-Moon:—"Well, Tom, how did you like it?"—"Oh! it was *very* fine: Kean's dancing is glorious itself, by G—d!"

But on the 12th of January, 1816, Massinger's play of "A New Way to Pay Old Debts" was revived; and here he again produced a tremendous effect upon the town, by his performance of Sir Giles Overreach. We are not very great admirers of Massinger. We think that, in reference to his contemporaries, he is considerably overrated. But Sir Giles (unquestionably his *chef-d'œuvre*) is a striking personage. Without any of the grace of Shakspeare's characters, and defective in those delicate shades and wonderful variety, by which all of them are distinguished, Massinger's hero is nevertheless a

fine, rough, sturdy sketch. It is clearly and decisively drawn, and possesses individuality. If we were inclined to find fault with the character, we should say that it is not filled out and completed. We see only the ruling passion, and not, as in Shakspeare, *all* the passions. It is, in fact, somewhat bare and monotonous; particularly in the earlier parts of the play. Men do not act from one motive, but from a hundred motives. They do not pursue their way regularly to the end, but turn aside and loiter: they fluctuate in intention: their hearts soften and grow hard, as circumstances operate upon them. The same passion, if it pursue them through the story (as in the case of jealousy or revenge), has its phases and changes, and is no more constant to one quarter than the moon. Now, in Massinger, there is no relief or variety. All is simple, obdurate, and unchanging. We speak of this as the fault pervading the

play generally. For, it is right to say, that the character of Sir Giles is in some degree redeemed from this error (if it be one) in the latter portions of the tragedy, particularly in the scenes between him and his daughter, and between him and Marall; and also where he exhibits, first, his desire for rank, and afterwards his contempt for it, when it has eluded his grasp. His sudden remorse, at the conclusion of the drama, however, is absolutely ludicrous. It is one of those clumsy instances of what is called "poetical justice," which so frequently disfigure our English productions. Kean acted Sir Giles in his very best style: he kept close to the character, and indulged himself in few or none of those freaks or relaxations of manner, into which he occasionally broke in his other parts, and injured their integrity. His performance was vigorous, true, uniform, and complete. It was not so grand as his Othello,

because the character does not admit of such grandeur; but the conclusion was as terrific as anything that has been seen upon the stage. It threw ladies in the side-boxes into hysterics, and Lord Byron himself into a "convulsion-fit." One veteran actress was so overpowered, by the last dying speech of Sir Giles, that she absolutely fainted upon the stage. All these things show more clearly than we can do, the surprising energy of Kean's acting. His success was equal to his merit. He performed the character seventeen times before the 9th of March, and brought a prodigious sum of money into the Drury Lane treasury.

Kean exulted, as much as the humblest actor could do, at the applause that he forced from his audiences. The praise of individuals, however sincere or valuable, was nothing to that of the public. And to the praise of lords in particular, he seems to

have been more than usually indifferent. When he returned home after his great triumph in Sir Giles Overreach, his wife met him at the door. "Well," said she, eagerly, "well,—what *did* Lord Essex think of it?" "D—n Lord Essex!" retorted the contemptuous tragedian. "*The pit* ROSE *at me!*"

The play of "A New Way to Pay Old Debts" having proved so beneficial to the theatre, the Committee resolved (at the instigation of Kean himself, we believe) to try another of Massinger's dramas. Accordingly, they put "The Duke of Milan" into rehearsal, and Kean studied the principal part, Sforza. Upon its representation, however (on the 9th of March), the play proved almost a failure. It is not calculated to make its way on the stage; and there was nothing in Kean's acting (excepting a few fine touches towards the conclusion) that could redeem it. But

he was to repeat the character of Sforza on the 26th of the month; and here we must be more circumstantial. According to the newspaper report of the next day, "An extraordinary disappointment was suffered last night. A numerous and splendid company was assembled to witness the representation of 'The Duke of Milan.' The performers were generally dressed, and we understand that Mr. Bartley had even delivered the preparatory Address, when it was discovered that Mr. Kean had not come to the theatre. After waiting with the utmost anxiety till seven o'clock, Mr. Rae informed the audience of the fact, and prayed for their indulgence. Some accident, it was feared, had happened to him, for it was the first time he had ever been known, either in town or country, to neglect his duty. The house, with their usual good nature, permitted the entertain-

ments of 'Fortune's Frolics,' and 'Ways and Means,' to be substituted. In a short time, information was brought to the house, that he had rode out in his one-horse-chaise in the morning, and at half-past twelve o'clock had left it in East Smithfield, saying, he would take a boat to Greenwich, and that he would return in a post-chaise in time to perform at the theatre. Up to a late hour last night no tidings had been received of him, which gave rise to the most serious apprehensions for his safety. We sincerely hope that no fatal accident has happened to this incomparable artist."—Other papers were jocose upon "Mr. Kean's serious accident," and on "Cooke's serious accidents," and on the "serious accidents" of actors in general, and this called forth an indignant defence from Hazlitt, then the dramatic critic for the Examiner or the Morning

Chronicle. Another person spoke very seriously of a certain "Jemmy Wright," a strolling player, fonder of tippling than of tragedy. In fine, Kean felt that the public would require some reason for his non-performance; and he therefore, previously to his re-appearance at the theatre, in the early part of April, set to work and manufactured the following address:—

"Ladies and Gentlemen,—For the first time in my life, I have been the unfortunate cause of disappointing the public amusement.

"That it is the only time, on these boards, I can appeal to your own recollection; and when you take into calculation the two hundred and sixty-five times that I have had the honour to appear before you, according to the testimony of the manager's books, you will, perhaps, be able to make some allowance.

"To your favour I owe all the reputation I enjoy.

"I rely on your candour, that prejudice shall not rob me of what your kindness has conferred upon me."

This "terse and sensible speech," as one of the critical writers of the time calls it, "turned—as all stage speeches, sensible or not, invariably do—the tide in his favour." We ourselves think that the speech was a sensible speech; for it promised nothing, and mis-stated nothing.

But what were *the facts?*—Why, the facts were as follow. On the 8th of March, Kean went to the theatre, to play Sir Giles Overreach, a task that fatigued him, intending to come home early, in order that he might be able to go through the part of Sforza on the following evening. Unluckily, Sir Giles proved too distressing. It not only made the audience shudder, and caused fits and faintings, but it made the tragedian himself horribly thirsty. Forgetting all the bitter

reproaches which he had just been casting upon that simple member of the magistracy, Mr. Justice Greedy, he repaired to a tavern hard by, and tossed off some mighty measures, with a readiness that showed that, at all events, it was not his first appearance in *that* character. In the course of time, he grew Anacreontic; and, after certain Pagan solemnities (of which "Come Jolly Bacchus" and other hymns of a similar import formed part), he confessedly started off for Deptford, in the cool of the morning, with some individuals of the "Jemmy Wright" species, totally oblivious of his dukedom of Milan, and resolved (if he made any resolutions at all) that he would not be poisoned that night by Francesco, to please the most "numerous and splendid company" in Christendom.

His wife, of course, had heard nothing of him. In the evening of the day of his disappearance, whilst Mrs. Kean (who had not seen him

since the preceding night) sat at home, hoping that he might have found his way to the theatre, a gentleman had called upon her, and stated that he was going to the play-house to enjoy her husband's performance. She had requested him to deliver a note and some small articles of dress to the tragedian, which he promised to do, and also to transmit that personage's answer to her, without delay. The hours had gone by, however, without her receiving any reply. But, at ten o'clock, another friend came in, and delivered the unwelcome intelligence that Mr. Kean had not been at the theatre, and that (although messengers had been despatched in all directions) he was no where to be found. This was alarming enough, and, but that she had long been accustomed to the "eccentricities of genius," she would have suffered even more severely than she did. She resolved, however, to sit up all night, and await the

event, whatever it might be. Nothing occurred during the night, either to increase or diminish her alarm. The next morning several members of the Drury Lane Committee called upon her, with inquiries and condolence; but there was still no news of the truant. At last, (to cut the matter short,) on the third day after his disappearance, tidings arrived that the Duke of Milan was found!

The intelligence was brought by Mr. Horn, who at the same time informed Mrs. Kean, with an air of sincere sympathy, that her husband had met with "a serious accident," and was lying at a little public-house at Deptford. He added, however, that the tragedian was now so far recovered, as to be able to venture to town the next day. Mrs. Kean started up, and intimated her intention of going to her husband without delay. Mr. Horn (now between the horns of a dilemma) was "averse to this." He thought that Mr. Kean would

"prefer" that she should await his return in London. Other friends, however, stepping in with counter advice, she ordered the carriage, and taking with her Mrs. Plumptre and a clergyman (ready for extreme unction), set off for the public-house at Deptford.

In order to be armed at all points, the party called in their way upon an eminent surgeon in Parliament Street. It was their intention to have impressed him into the service; but it happened that he was from home. They therefore proceeded on their journey, full of frightful misgivings, and in due time arrived at the scene of distress. The outside of the public-house was thronged with actors. Our party scrutinized them, but did not detect any signs of commiseration. On the contrary, the wretches appeared careless and happy enough. They were evidently come to exult at a hero's fate—greedy vultures, hovering over the body of the eagle,

by whose death they were to benefit. However, Mrs. Kean and her friends alighted and entered the house. The first thing that met their eyes were preparations for a large dinner! "Surely," whispered she to the Rev. Mr. ———, "this must be bad for him." He shook his head, and assented; and they then inquired their way to Mr. Kean's bed-chamber. After satisfying the proprietor of the house that they were entitled to make inquiries after "the patient," they were announced, and, after a little pause, conducted to a small squalid bedroom; and there, stretched on his back, more prostrate if possible than when on the field of Bosworth, lay "the representative of Shakspeare's heroes."

He was evidently not in high stage condition. To the most tender inquiries, as to the cause of his accident, and the seat of pain, &c., he was more than sufficiently laconic. Little could be extracted from him,

except moans and grimaces, such as sick men have the privilege of using. He admitted, however, that his "shoulder was just put to rights," and that it was impossible that he could be moved. "Then," said Mrs. Kean, with alacrity, "I will stay with you, and nurse you." But this he would by no means allow. He could not bear the thought of her remaining in such a wretched place. And when she persisted in her benevolent intentions, rather than give way to them, he resolved to return with her to London. He was accordingly raised, with great difficulty, placed in the carriage, and propped up by pillows. Mrs. Plumptre sat by his side, and his wife on the floor of the vehicle, and thus the litter made its slow way to Clarges Street. On arriving there, he was lifted out very carefully, and helped up to his bed-room. Mrs. Kean's friends now departed, and she then advised the sick man to go to bed without delay.

"Sitting up is bad for you," she said; "and your coat sleeve (why hasn't it been opened?) must irritate your dislocated shoulder. How shall we get your coat off?" In an instant, the injured arm was flourishing in the air, and the coat was off, "as if by magic." The wife was frightened. "You must have dislocated it again," said she. "Nothing of the sort," replied he: "The doctor said that the quicker I was in getting my coat off, the better."—But here the comedian gave way to the man. For, as he saw his wife staring at him with all her might (a compound of alarm and incredulity), a smile began to steal over his cheek, which very speedily gave way to a boisterous laugh. "And you are really not hurt?" inquired Mrs. Kean. "Not a bit," said our hero; and thereupon, stripping up his shirt-sleeve, and tearing a large plaster from his shoulder, the Deptford tragedy concluded.

He never willingly disappointed the public again. Once afterwards he had recourse to the same sort of acting in private, indeed. He had promised to attend a dinner party, but found himself disabled by his morning's libations, and was forced to plead illness. This excuse, sent at the eleventh hour, induced one of the party to come over to him in the course of the evening, to express the regrets of the assembled company at his absence. By this time, our actor was recovered; and, feeling that he must, in some way or other, substantiate his excuse, he threw his countenance and dress into disorder, and feigned sickness with as much success as on the former occasion at Deptford. Let us not be mistaken. Our hero had no aversion to dining; but he hated mortally to dine in good company. He enjoyed a beef-steak at the Coal-Hole, or a devil or a grill at one of the small taverns near the theatre; but the dress, and ceremony, and

good behaviour, incident to "company," overset him altogether. In Ireland, on one occasion, he was invited to dine at the Castle. This was when Lord Whitworth was Lord Lieutenant. He would fain have excused himself. He would have purchased a "certificate" from any respectable apothecary, willing to extricate a son of genius from the bad air of a court; but he was told that he must go. The invitation, like a mission from royalty, was in effect a command. He therefore prepared to obey, and accordingly went; returning, however, dismally fatigued at the long imprisonment that he had endured, in order to show himself a good subject. He visited even Lord Byron (then his great admirer) very reluctantly. We should not have imagined that excess of ceremony had been the vice there; although of course the habits of a gentleman prevailed. Nevertheless, Kean was not at ease; and on

one occasion, when he dined either with Mr. Douglas Kinnaird to meet Lord Byron, or with the noble poet himself, he absconded very speedily after the cloth was removed, and went to enjoy himself amongst his familiars. As soon as his absence was discovered, and it was found that he had left the house, one or two of the party (Mr. Kinnaird and Lord Byron himself, as we are informed) sought him out at one of his places of rendezvous, and came full upon him at the moment of inspiration. He was surrounded by fighters (it happened we believe at Spring's house), by obscure actors, and lovers of merriment of all sorts. When first seen, he was lifting a goblet to his mouth (in which the juice of the juniper had "killed," as sailors say, the water), and was d—n—g "lords" with all the vigour of a sincere hater. His disrespect towards Lords had no saving clause, even in favour of the hero of Waterloo; for, being

invited by a lady of high rank to *recite* (!) before the Duke of Wellington, at a large party, given in compliment to him, after his return from Paris, the tragedian rejected the invitation instantly. He was told that the Duke's numerous engagements, &c., prevented his attending the theatre; but our hero was firm in his refusal. In the words of our informant, he said, that "he was asked by these people, not as their equal—not as a gentleman—scarcely as a man of talent,—but as a wild beast, to be stared at. He was very proud in his own way."

For his amusement, or the amusement of his merry equals, however, he would recite and sing, and give admirable imitations of his brother actors. He could mimic John Kemble and other tragedians well; and when the musical "fit was on him," he would give exceedingly close imitations of Michael Kelly and Incledon. He treated his guests

with these, one night, in Clarges Street, and Incledon, who was one of the party, enjoyed it amazingly, laughing with prodigious vivacity, until he himself was imitated, when he suddenly became serious, then offended, and in a few minutes quitted the house. The "*veluti in speculum*," which used to present itself to our admiring eyes, arching the stage with its instructive legend, was intended, we suppose, for the benefit of spectators, and not of actors.

Mr. Maturin's tragedy of Bertram was submitted to the theatre about this time. It was sent to Kean for his approval, before it was accepted by the committee. At first sight, he thought that the part of the hero would serve to increase his reputation, and he gladly undertook to perform it. The first rehearsal of the play, however, changed his view of the subject, and he came home dissatisfied with the character, and of opinion

that the heroine was the most effective part in the tragedy. "Mine is but a secondary part," said he. "However, there is no Mrs. Siddons to play Imogen, and eclipse me." With this consolation in his soul, he studied Bertram attentively for several days, determined to make the hero the most conspicuous object in the play; and he succeeded. He succeeded also, in spite of its defects as a drama, in enticing the public to come and witness the representation of Bertram twenty-two nights in this season. The benediction, "God bless the child," for which Kean obtained so much applause, had been previously uttered a hundred times over his own son Charles. He repeated it so often, and so fervently, that he became touched by the modulation of his own voice; which, under the before-mentioned circumstances, acquired a tenderness "beyond the reach of art." This phrase, and the other of "the wretched

have no country," he pronounced to be the pathetic points in the play. In other respects, he thought little of the tragedy. It served him to act in the provinces, however. "It is," said he, "a relief, after such characters as Richard and Othello. It is all sound and fury, signifying nothing." The best parts in his acting, were the dream, the recognition of Imogen, and the last scene, which was full of pathos and effect.

To Miss Somerville (Mrs. Bunn), the "Imogen" of the play, he did not, we think, do justice. Some one observing to him, that it was a pity that she had not had a good master, to give her information as to the mechanical points in acting, Kean replied quickly, "There's only one master that she wants, and that is—Nature." Now, we are inclined to think, that since the disappearance of Miss O'Neil from the stage, Mrs. Bunn had as many pretensions to the title of a

tragic actress as any lady whom we have seen, with the single exception of Miss Fanny Kemble. Neither her voice nor her action were bad; and she had the good quality of rarely sinking into monotony or soaring into rant.

Kean acted *Kitely*, (indifferently,) in Ben Jonson's play of "Every Man in his Humour," for his benefit, on the 6th of June; and on the 27th of June, 1816, he left London for the season, having, by his performance of Sir Giles Overreach, added another large and flourishing leaf to the garland of his renown.

CHAPTER VIII.

TIMON—OROONOKO—A SHORT WRESTLE WITH BOOTH—THE IRON CHEST—KEAN IN PARIS—TALMA—THE DRURY-LANE FUND—DISPUTES WITH THE COMMITTEE—JEW OF MALTA—DOUGLAS—CORIOLANUS—LEAR.

(1816 to 1820.) We do not intend to follow our hero through all the parts which he undertook*; but shall content ourselves with a passing mention of them in future, unless their importance (intrinsically, or from his acting) shall seem to us to demand a more minute inquiry.

In his fourth season (28th October, 1816) he played Timon; and (20th January, 1817) Oroonoko. Notwithstanding the grandeur

* A list of all the characters in which he appeared, will be found in the Notes to this volume.

and vigour of Timon—which in parts are as intense as Lear itself—the play is not adapted to representation; and Kean was unable, by dint of his own single strength, to make it popular. In fact, although one of the finest, it is at the same time one of the least dramatic works of Shakspeare. It is more of a mono-drame than a play. There is no one but Timon. All the other characters are simply persons upon whom his generosity or wrath are to be expended. They draw him out, but do little or nothing themselves. Kean, as was to be expected, gave all the dialogue in the latter part of the play with prodigious effect: his retorts upon Apemantus, and his curses on ungrateful Athens—

> "Let me look back upon thee, O thou wall,
> That girdlest in those wolves!" &c.

were made as fierce as voice and expression could render them. But he did not exhibit the

whole character. We beheld in him the bitter sceptic, but not the easy, lordly, and magnificent Timon. The play was repeated for some nights, after which it was withdrawn from the stage, and has not since been revived.

Oroonoko is a part, in which there is little for an actor of Kean's peculiar powers to do. It is amiable, but wanting in dramatic spirit. There are one or two tender touches, which the tragedian invested with all his extraordinary pathos; but the part was shortly abandoned.

It cannot be said that Kean succeeded greatly in either of these parts, but he soon made amends for this. One of his most signal triumphs was effected about this time. Many of our readers will probably recollect Mr. Booth. That his manner was an ingenious imitation of that of Kean, there can be no doubt. His person being about the same size, and his voice adapting itself to the same tones, it

is not very wonderful that when the two actors were apart from each other, there were found persons simple enough to mistake the trick and fashion for the spirit of acting, and to confound the two players as equals. This did not last long; for the quality of Booth's acting was suddenly and unexpectedly brought to a test, and the error rectified. Mr. Booth, who originally was a member of the Covent Garden company, entered into a treaty with the managers of Drury Lane, and agreed to appear with Kean in Othello. The approach and expected collision between these two theatrical planets excited vast curiosity, which, however, was speedily allayed by the decided and total extinction of the lesser light. The house was filled to the ceiling. The actors at the side scenes partook of the general excitement, and awaited the issue in doubt and trembling. Kean (who played Othello) seemed to have braced his energies up to a

high point. He was completely self-possessed: there was a greater firmness than usual, in his tread and general deportment; and the tones of his voice were (beyond their wont) clear, rapid, and decisive; like those of a man conscious of his strength, and resolved to scatter aside, by a single blow, the vexations which an inferior antagonist had thrown in the way of his march of triumph. Booth, at first, seemed to shrink from the combat. He eventually, however, overcame his fear, and went through the part of Iago manfully. But Kean!—no sooner did the interest of the story begin, and the passion of the part justify his fervour, than he seemed to *expand* from the small quick resolute figure which had previously been moving about the stage, and to assume the vigour and dimensions of a giant. He glared down upon the now diminutive Iago; he seized and tossed him

aside, with frightful and irresistible vehemence. Till then we had seen Othello and Iago, as it were, together: now the Moor seemed to occupy the stage, alone. Up and down, to and fro, he went, pacing about like the chafed lion, who has received his fatal hurt, but whose strength is still undiminished. The fury and whirlwind of the passions seemed to have endowed him with supernatural strength. His eye was glittering and bloodshot, his veins were swollen, and his whole figure restless and violent. It seemed dangerous to cross his path, and death to assault him. There is no doubt but that Kean was excited on this occasion, in a most extraordinary degree; as much as though he had been maddened by wine. The impression which he made upon the audience has, perhaps, never been equalled in theatrical annals. Even the actors, hardened in their art, were moved. One comedian, a veteran

of forty years' standing, told us that, when Kean rushed off the stage in the third act, he (our narrator) felt all his face deluged with tears—"a thing, I give you my word, Sir, that has never happened to me, since I was a crack—thus high."

In the year 1817, Kean played in the Iron Chest; not his old part of Peter, (that was pre-occupied, we suppose;) but the character of *Sir Edward Mortimer*. The first time we ever saw this baronet with the bloody hand represented, our old acquaintance Elliston was the hero. God forgive us! how we admired him! His frowns, his struggles, his distortions, his spasmodic confessions, were all charming. This was in our 'salad days,' when we were greener in judgment than we could now have believed, had we not this precious fact to refer to. The next representative of Sir Edward was Mr. Young, who played the part very much after the

after the fashion of Jupiter Tonans. Then came little Kean, the quietest, but the most determined of the three. He did not exhibit much spasm; nor did he roar out the confession of his murder, like the bull of Basan; but he looked!—as no one ever looked, before or since. The tones of his voice,. trembling with remorse, penetrated your heart; and in the trial scene, where he sat silent, and death-pale, his fingers grasping the arm-chair in which he sate, till you thought that the strong oak must crumble into powder,—who has ever done the like?

Kean performed *Bajazet*, in the tragedy of Tamerlane, and also *Eustache de Saint Pierre*, in the play of The Surrender of Calais, in the year 1817. In the latter character, he intended to have made a frightful impression on the town, by the help of a wig, made after the pattern of Count Ugolino's. "I'll frighten the audience with

it," said he: but the audience would not be frightened. On the contrary, when he appeared, he was only partially recognised by the spectators. Some persons even inquired—"who is that fellow?" and none cried "God bless him!" The wig, in short, was not appreciated, although it was of elaborate construction, and stood up, bristling with its grey hairs, like a chevaux de frise. The tragedian gave up the part in disgust.

The next year (1818) saw him in France; but he did not suit the taste of the Parisians. We can easily imagine that critics who fall into raptures at the tragedies of Voltaire and Racine, would dislike the natural acting of Kean. Talma, however, saw and admitted the brilliant points of his brother tragedian, and was anxious to impress him with respect for his own acting. He played Orestes before him and Mrs. Kean. At first, Talma did not make much impression on his new auditors;

but his power developed itself gradually, as he went on; and in the mad scene, Kean instantly allowed that he was grand and overpowering. And yet, our player was jealous of the praises which his wife lavished upon the French tragedian. The latter, unconscious of having excited any unpleasant feelings, called the next day, saw Mrs. Kean, and in reply to her compliments, said "I shall play Sylla to-night. If you were struck with my Orestes, what will you say to my Sylla?" We are sorry not to be able to give any account of the last mentioned performance; but the fact is that Kean, after his own wilful fashion, immediately resolved to leave Paris, rather than witness the second triumph of Talma. He packed up his clothes, ordered his carriage, and was some way on the road to Boulogne-sur-mer, when the Roman dictator was calling forth plaudits from all the critics in Paris, upon his performance.

Amongst other marks of respect bestowed upon Kean, at this period of his life, was his election to the situation of Master and Treasurer of the Drury Lane Fund. The post was purely honorary. But, although it did not return any money into his exchequer, it enabled him to commit divers and sundry extravagancies, in the shape of after-dinner orations. Kean's rhetoric was of the flagrant order. If he was in earnest and moved to speak, he could speak pithily, sensibly, and like a man. But if it was merely his duty to manufacture a speech, or if wine only suggested it, nothing could be so florid or vicious as his style. His laboured harangues and letters were strewed over with flowers and quotations, both English and Latin, till it was not easy to detect the little meaning that they contained. As Master and Treasurer of the Fund, it became his pleasant duty, once a-year, to stop the bottle, and detail the woes

of the pensioners, to a large assembly of the friends and patrons of the drama. We do not propose, of course, to treat our readers with these speeches, which, in fact, consist in a great degree of very uninteresting particulars. The objects of the Society were highly praiseworthy; but we are somewhat sceptical as to the value of the annual eloquence which was (and is still, we believe) supposed to promote its views.

Kean's speeches, in particular, grew worse as the night began to wane. He went from common subjects to Shakspeare, and from Shakspeare he again rose,—higher and higher, till he became enveloped in a cloud of indescribable Latin. His stages of frenzy are well marked by the following dialogue, which we extract from one of Mr. Leman Rede's very clever and amusing papers on the subject of our actor*.

* These papers—The early days of Edmund Kean, and Recollections of Kean—appeared in the "New

(*Time, Two in the Morning.*)

Phillips—"Waiter, what was Mr. Kean doing, when you left the room?"

Waiter—"Playing the piano, Sir, and singing."

Phillips—"Oh, come; he's all right, then."

(*Quarter past Two.*)

Phillips—"What's Mr. Kean doing now?"

Waiter—"Making a speech, Sir, about Shakspeare."

Phillips—"He's getting drunk; you'd better order the carriage."

(*Half past Two.*)

Phillips—"What's he at, now?"

Waiter—"He's talking Latin, Sir."

Phillips—"Then, he *is* drunk. I must get him away."

Kean succeeded Mr. John Bannister as Master of the Fund, and on the first yearly meeting after his election, he paid a well-merited compliment to his predecessor. When he said "Jack Bannister was an excellent

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Monthly Magazines," for April and May, 1834, and are decidedly the best things that we have met with, in the shape of Reminiscences of Kean.

actor, and a good man," he said nothing but what every one in the room assented to. It is a pleasure to us to repeat this; for we believe that there never was an actor who descended into private life, so entirely untouched by calumny as Mr. Bannister, or better entitled to respect. Kean continued Master of the Fund during some years; and made various speeches at the yearly dinners. Upon one occasion, he found himself on the morning of the anniversary with a brace of black eyes. How he was to exhibit his usual pathos, under these circumstances, became a problem. His friends thought that his appearance, in this plight, would be hazardous to his reputation as sober master of a charity fund, and they advised different remedies. In the end, one of his brother actors, (Mr. Harley, we believe,) borrowed a brush and some white and flesh-coloured paint, and by dint of a few judicious touches,

enabled the tragedian to face the Duke of York, the chairman of the evening, with his usual credit. On this occasion, Kean spoke with more than his usual pathos. He painted an old couple (of actors) who had weathered the storm of life together—who had been pure in conduct, and faithful to each other under every calamity, passing the sunset of their lives, serenely and respectably, supported by a moderate allowance from the Drury Lane Fund. He spoke till he melted all hearts. Strangers wept at his eloquence: the Duke of York wept: nay, he himself wept. What the amount of the subscriptions was, we are not able to say.

We do not know who it was that advised Kean to revive Kit Marlow's tragedy of "The Jew of Malta," on the 24th of April, 1818. There are certainly a few of the old dramatist's "mighty lines" in it; but it is as certainly defective in interest, improbable in its

plot, and is stuffed with blood and all sorts of atrocities to such a degree as to amount to burlesque. It was not likely to succeed, notwithstanding the tragedian added to the character a song, which he sang in a sweet and florid style. We ourselves cannot imagine any ditty short of "Fee, fa, fum," becoming the mouth of Barabas, the Jew. Kean's death, in this play, was a fine piece of pantomimic acting. The Jew of Malta failed; and a month afterwards (May 1828) our hero acted the part of *Young Norval*, in Home's tragedy of "Douglas;" and in the tender scenes of the play, between himself and his mother, as well as in the retort upon Glenalvon, produced a very great effect. In the same year, (December) Kean filled the principal part in the play of "Richard, Duke of York." This drama was, in effect, a compilation of Shakspeare's three parts of Henry the Sixth, and did great credit to the in-

genuity of the author, Mr. Merivale. A task of this kind involved great difficulties. We suspect that it would have been easier for the compiler to have *expanded* the characters (as they appear in any one of the three plays of Henry the Sixth), than to have reconciled the separate parts with each other. If we remember rightly, there were some graceful additions made by Mr. Merivale himself, for the purpose of connecting several of the scenes of the play. Kean produced some striking effects in the part of Richard, and always spoke of it in terms of high eulogium.

It was about this time, that our hero became entangled in a quarrel with Mr. Bucke, the author of "The Italians." The controversy excited a good deal of comment and bitterness at the time, amongst the admirers and opponents of Kean; but the subject is now at rest, and there we are content to leave it. Whether our actor was or was not supported

by a band of fierce partisans, calling themselves "The Wolf Club," or whether he was a member or not of that community, are questions which may be passed over, without injury either to our hero's reputation, or to the sincerity or completeness of this present narrative. There is no doubt but that Kean had disputes enough with authors and managers. Amongst the rest, he quarrelled with the Drury-Lane Committee, on the subject of the characters which they tendered to him. They suggested, at one time, that he should play the part of *Joseph Surface*, in "The School for Scandal;" and this is his answer to their proposal:—

"Mr. Kean returns to the Committee the character of Joseph Surface, which he has, with surprise and mortification, received this day. Mr. K. wishes submissively to bring to the recollection of the gentlemen, that the

material service which he has rendered to the establishment over which they preside, has been by peculiar success in the *first walk* of the Drama; and he will never insult the judgment of a British public, by appearing before them in any other station, but the important one to which they have raised him. It will likewise be impossible that he can reach London till the 4th, and that by breaking engagements, and the loss of hundreds. But, however arbitrary and unjustifiable this summons, he knows his engagement, and must submit. But he wishes them perfectly to understand, that, *whatever is the consequence*, he will not submit to any sacrifice of his talent!!"

Mr. Douglas Kinnaird was, it seems, a foremost man in this matter; and therefore the tragedian treated him also with an epistle on the subject. Here is the letter:—

"Do you think, Mr. Kinnaird, that ratified engagements are to be broken, upon a word? According to such principles, I should say, 'I will not come to town for these two months; but, knowing these affairs a little better than you do, I say I shall immediately come to London on the expiration of my *Plymouth engagement;* the 31st of August. Then I shall be compelled to give up situations that would have procured me hundreds. I have, with the just indignation of insulted talent, returned, to the Committee, Joseph Surface. I cannot conceive the Committee's intentions towards me, unless it is to destroy my reputation as an *actor*, and interest as a man. But, without disguise or subterfuge, I tell them—I'll be damned if they do either."

On the 16th of November, 1819, some of our hero's Scottish admirers presented him with "a sword of state," to be worn in the

tragedy of Macbeth. It was transmitted to our actor by Sir John Sinclair, and was accompanied by a complimentary letter. The sword was, in Sir John's words, "of true Highland make, and ornamented with some of the most valuable precious stones that Scotland produces." Kean acknowledged the present by a very grateful and proper letter*.

In the early part of the year 1820, Kean attempted the part of *Coriolanus;* and—it must be admitted—failed. He shortly afterwards revived Shakspeare's great tragedy of "Lear." And here we shall venture to waive entering into a discussion on the subject, in order that we may introduce a very eloquent piece of writing by Mr. Hazlitt. It appeared in the Old London Magazine, but (by some mistake, we suppose) was not reprinted in

* See the Notes to this volume.

the volume wherein he collected most of his criticisms upon "The English Stage."

"Into the bursts, and starts, and torrent of the passion in Othello," he says, "this excellent actor [*Kean*] appeared to have flung himself completely. There was all the fitful fever of the blood, the jealous madness of the brain; his heart seemed to bleed with anguish, while his tongue dropped broken, imperfect accents of woe; but there is something (we don't know how) in the gigantic, outspread sorrows of Lear, that seems to elude his grasp, and baffle his attempts at comprehension. The passion in Othello pours along, so to speak, like a river, torments itself in restless eddies, or is hurled from its dizzy height, like a sounding cataract. That in Lear is more like a sea, swelling, chafing, raging, without bound, without hope, without beacon, or anchor. Torn from the hold of his affections and fixed purposes, he floats a mighty wreck

in the wild world of sorrows. Othello's causes of complaint are more distinct and pointed, and he has a desperate, a maddening remedy for them in his revenge. But Lear's injuries are without provocation, and admit of no alleviation or atonement. They are strange, bewildering, overwhelming: they wrench asunder, and stun the whole frame: they 'accumulate horror on horror's head,' and yet leave the mind impotent of resources, cut off, proscribed, anathematised from the common hope of good to itself or ill to others—amazed at its own situation, but unable to avert it, scarce daring to look at, or weep over it. The action of the mind, however, under this load of disabling circumstances, is brought out in the play in the most triumphant manner; it staggers under them, but it does not yield. The character is cemented of human strength and human weaknesses (the firmer for the mix-

ture); abandoned of fortune, of nature, of reason, and without any energy of purpose, or power of action left, with the grounds of all hope and comfort failing under it, but sustained, reared to a majestic height out of the yawning abyss, by the force of the affections, the imagination, and the cords of the human heart—it stands a proud monument in the gap of nature, over barbarous cruelty and filial ingratitude. We had thought that, Mr. Kean would take possession of this time-worn, venerable figure, 'that has outlasted a thousand storms, a thousand winters,' and, like the gods of old, when their oracles were about to speak, shake it with present inspiration:—that he would set up a living copy of it on the stage. But he failed, either from insurmountable difficulties, or from his own sense of the magnitude of the undertaking. There are pieces of ancient granite that turn the edge of any modern chisel; so,

perhaps, the genius of no living actor can be expected to cope with Lear. Mr. Kean chipped off a bit of the character here and there; but he did not pierce the solid substance, nor move the entire mass. Indeed, he did not go the right way about it. He was too violent at first, and too tame afterwards. He sunk from unmixed rage to mere dotage. Thus (to leave this general description, and come to particulars) he made the well-known curse a piece of downright rant. He 'tore it to tatters, to very rags,' and made it from beginning to end, an explosion of ungovernable physical rage, without solemnity or elevation. Now, this should not certainly be spoken in a fit of drunken choler, without any 'compunctious visitings of nature,' without any relentings of tenderness, as if it was a mere speech of hate, directed against a person to whom he had the most rooted and unalterable aversion. The very bitterness of the

imprecations is prompted by, and turns upon an allusion to the fondest recollections: it is an excess of indignation, but that indignation from the depth of its source, conjures up the dearest images of love. It is from these that the burning cup of anguish overflows; and the voice, in going over them, should falter, and be choked with other feelings besides anger. The curse in Lear should not be scolded, but be recited as a hymn to the Penates! Lear is not a Timon. From the action and attitude into which Mr. Kean put himself to repeat this passage, we had augured a different result. He threw himself on his knees; lifted up his arms, like withered stumps; threw his head quite back, and in that position, as if severed from all that held him to society, breathed a heart-struck-prayer, like a figure of a man obtruncated! —It was the only moment worthy of himself and of the character."

The critic afterwards recals this opinion, in part, and admits that Kean was very great in the second act, where Lear seems absolutely stunned by the ingratitude of his children, and cries out in his bewildered manner—

> "I will do such things—
> What they are—I know not: but they shall be
> The terrors of the earth," &c.

—Kean did not repeat the character of Lear very frequently, but fell back upon his old characters; and when his engagement for the season terminated, he set sail for America.

CHAPTER IX.

KEAN IN AMERICA — HIS RETURN TO ENGLAND — WORSHIPPING A RELIC — DE MONTFORT — KEAN AND YOUNG—THE ISLE OF BUTE—SECOND VISIT TO THE CONTINENT—COX *v.* KEAN—ITS CONSEQUENCES—HIS RETURN TO AMERICA.

KEAN'S progress through the United States of America, was one continued march of triumph. Until the period of his quarrel with the people of Boston, in June, 1821, he had encountered nothing but respect and applause. The newspaper critics indeed differed a little as to his particular points of excellence, in the various parts which he undertook; but the general verdict in favour of his acting was unanimous. The amount of money that he brought to the American

managers and to speculators in box-tickets must have been prodigious; for the play-houses were not only filled to the ceiling, but the tickets were put up *to auction* on the nights of his performance, and produced considerable sums of money *beyond* the ordinary price. The anxiety to witness his acting had, it seems, caused such a ferment amongst the citizens of New York, that the managers of the New York theatre put forth an announcement:—"To prevent the riotous scenes which have disturbed the peace of the town in the vicinity of the theatre, for several days and nights past, in efforts to forestal tickets, the managers have directed that the box-tickets of the whole lower tier, and fourteen of the second row next to the stage, shall be sold by public auction, the premiums for the choice to be appropriated to the Massachussetts General Hospital." Upon the first day's auction, upwards of eighteen dollars

were paid for the *choice* of a single box, containing nine persons; and on the second day's auction, the total sum paid for the *choice* of seats, for *one* night, amounted to four hundred dollars and fifty cents. Kean himself reaped a large and brilliant harvest. Money and fame poured in upon him whenever and wherever he appeared. He first showed himself to the Americans at New York, in the character of Richard the Third. This was about November, 1820, and he continued in America, traversing all the northern provinces of the Union, till about August, 1821. For once in his life, he was prudent enough to transmit money from time to time to Coutts and Co., his bankers, and thus to put a large portion of his earnings out of his own immediate power. This saving spirit unluckily continued for a brief period, for on his return to England he drew cheque after cheque, in his old fashion, and very speedily levelled his

mountain of American gold. It should be stated, that during his stay in the United States, he erected a monument over the grave of the once famous George Frederic Cooke, an actor to whom, in more points than one, our hero bore a very striking resemblance. It was in the course of performing this task of love, that he was enabled to obtain a very valuable relic, to which we shall presently advert more particularly.

When we intimated that he was successful everywhere in America, we did not mean to exclude Boston; for he was received there, on his first visit, with extraordinary enthusiasm, drew large houses, "put money in his purse," and, in requital, acted for the benefit of the Boston charities. But his *second* visit to Boston was during the dull season of the year, at which time, finding the theatre almost wholly deserted, and in fact incompetent to pay him *anything* for the exertion

of his talents, he cut short (in the Gordian fashion) his engagement with the managers, and resolved to renounce Boston altogether, until a more generous season. This inflamed the people, and caused such a revulsion of feeling towards Kean, that upon one occasion the audience rose, with the intention, it is said, of committing some desperate outrage upon him. He escaped from the theatre in disguise, and was finally enabled to leave the city altogether, by the help of some rational persons, who admired his talents, and thought that there was some excuse for his seceding from an engagement, that appeared to have been made in utter ignorance of the periodical migrations of the Boston people. Kean himself, in a letter to the editor of the New York National Advocate, refers to this fact in very pithy and sarcastic terms *.

* Several of the letters and addresses, explanatory of this transaction, will be found in the notes to the present volume.

As late as in May 1821, Kean wrote to a friend in London, stating that he intended to stay with the Americans "another twelve-month;" but this resolution was afterwards abandoned, owing to the misunderstanding between him and the citizens of Boston; for in September of the same year we find him once more in England.

When Kean quitted America, he came away, as we have stated, richer by a huge quantity of Trans-atlantic gold, and a considerable increase of professional reputation. But this was not all. He had acquired something more,—a secret treasure. His money was transmitted to England; his fame was noised about the world; but the new acquisition was hugged close to his heart, and revealed only to a chosen few. It was not Bokara gold, nor silks of Samarcand, nor shawls woven in Indian looms, nor precious wines of Shiraz or Tokay. It was not one of those imaginary sources of wealth, drawn from

stills and crucibles—the elixir of life—the philosopher's stone. It was not—but we disdain to trifle with the impatience of the reader, and, to say truth, we hate to have any secrets from him. We therefore inform him, without more ado, that the secret treasure, the "unsunned gold" which rendered Kean, in his own dreams, richer than Crœsus or the Emperor of Delhi or Cathay, was nothing less than—the illustrious toe-bone of the great George Frederic Cooke! Let not the reader smile at this, or sneer at us, humble authors, as builders of a sorry jest. It is *a fact* indisputable that we are now recounting: we tell it in sober earnest.

Cooke was buried in New York; and when Kean was there, he visited what was supposed to be his grave. Being a great admirer of the dead tragedian, he caused his body to be taken up and removed to another place, and over the new grave he erected a

monument, in honour of the actor's genius. In the transition, from the old grave to the new, Kean abstracted one of the toe-bones. It was a little black relic, and might have passed for a tobacco-stopper. Some persons even said, "How do you know that this belonged to Cooke?" but the indignation of Kean at such scepticism, stifled all further questioning. He deposited the bone in his dressing-case, perfectly satisfied with its identity, locked it carefully up, and brought it to England.

When he arrived here, the Drury Lane Company, rejoicing at the return of their "head," resolved to meet and welcome him at some distance from London, and (by their presence) grace his entry into the metropolis. Elliston, as the principal person of the company, led the procession. The actors followed, according to rank, and in due time arrived at Barnet. This was the place which Kean had appointed for receiving them.

They were all to breakfast there, and then to return, in the tragedian's train, to London. On encountering the great actor, they were about to welcome him, each after his own fashion, when he stopped them, with a serious air. "Before you say a word, my merry men," said he—"Behold! Fall down, and kiss this relic! This is the toe-bone of the greatest creature that ever walked the earth —of George Frederic Cooke. He was lying without a monument, till I put one over him. Come, down with you all, and kiss the bone!" Elliston, between doubt and reverence, fell upon his knees and kissed the ridiculous relic. Another dropped down with difficulty; ("Our son was fat.") Then another came, and another; and thus actor after actor followed, from the beginning to the end of the line, till all had performed the ceremony. They then sat down to breakfast,—"with what appetite" we cannot pretend to say.

In an hour or two, the procession formed again, and, with Kean at its head, took the road to London. Our hero, still a treasurer (of relics), although he had given up the post of master and treasurer to the Drury Lane Fund, led the way to his house in Clarges Street. Arrived there, the greater part of his brother actors left him, and Kean proceeded to the library. His first words were (to his wife), "I have brought Charles a fortune. I have brought something that the Directors of the British Museum would give ten thousand pounds for; but—they shan't have it." Mrs. Kean, lost in wonder, inquired what it was. "Look here!" said he, producing it. "Here it is. Here is the toe-bone of the greatest man that ever lived —the illustrious George Frederic Cooke!" With that he proceeded to deposit it gently on the mantel-piece, saying, in caution, "Now, observe—I put this on the mantel-piece; but

let no one dare to touch it. You may all look at it,—at a distance; but be sure that no one presumes to handle it."

Here it remained for several months. Occasionally, (to an *intelligent* visiter), he would explain the merits of the bone; but otherwise it was honoured only by his own single admiration. His wife detested the bone. The servants hated it. The maids were afraid of it. They thought (probably) that it would get up and act. But no one ventured to hazard the tragedian's displeasure by meddling with it. At last, —it was one dull evening, when Kean had been absent from home for several days, and his wife was tired of waiting and watching for him—the detestable toe-bone presented itself to her sight. A few bitter words escaped her. She felt inclined to commit profanation on the relic, but contented herself with walking up and down, eyeing the

object of her husband's adoration with the most sincere disgust. She approached again; and finally seized the bone (protecting her fingers by a piece of paper), and 'canted' it without ceremony into the adjoining garden. This garden belonged to the Duke of Portland, and contained a well, which was dry; and it was into this well that the illustrious bone descended. In an instant, the House of Portland was unconsciously richer,—by ten thousand pounds, than it had been the hour before. The toe-bone was theirs! *Was*, do we say? Nay, it *is* theirs still,—up to this present writing.

It may easily be supposed, that a deed of this sort could not have been perpetrated without important consequences. Accordingly, Mrs. Kean soon began to experience some fearful alarms; and these were not allayed by a thundering rap at the door, which announced the tragedian's return. The door was opened,

and he went straight into the library,—*very* drunk. Whenever he was drunk, he went to the toe for consolation. But *now*,—the toe was not there! He rang the bell furiously. His wife answered the summons, when an inquiry (made in a terrible voice) met her at the door of the room:—"Have you seen Cooke's toe-bone?" After a little pause, she said, "Cooke's toe-bone, my dear?"—"Yes," returned he, sternly; "why do you reiterate my words? Cooke's toe-bone, I say."—"My dear," said his wife, submissively, "I'll go down and look for it, if you wish:" and she went accordingly. In the meantime, all the servants were called up (called out of their beds) to assist in the search. The search, as will be guessed, was fruitless. The tragedian waxed solemn. "Answer me," said he, "on your souls:—What has become of Cooke's toe-bone?" None of them knew. Each could disclaim

any participation in the robbery with a very safe conscience. He was satisfied as to their ignorance, and sent them out of the room; and then, turning to his wife, he addressed her gravely and almost sadly,—"Mary, your son has lost his fortune. He was worth 10,000*l.* Now he is a beggar." It occurred to the culprit, that another trip to America would have enabled her husband to bring home even a foot of the great Cooke, instead of a toe-bone only; but she did not hazard the observation.

Notwithstanding the above anecdote—which the reader may rely on—we have not heard that our hero was ever limited to the embraces of a strait waistcoat, or put under the care of a committee.

In December, 1821, Miss Joanna Baillie's play of "De Montfort" was produced at Drury-Lane Theatre. Kean of course acted the principal character; and, in order, we suppose, to invest it with sufficient gloom,

studied it by night in the church-yard at Hastings! The tragedy, which possesses very great merit, failed in becoming popular, even when supported by John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons (a host in herself); and it is, therefore, no reproach to Kean, that his performance was attended with no better success. Everybody seems to allow that he filled this character with great ability. The authoress herself complimented him highly on his acting, and the critics were almost unanimous in his favour. Mr. Campbell, in his Life of Mrs. Siddons, has referred to Kean's acting in this play. In addition to what he has there said, in the way of criticism, it may be stated, that the poet was at the time so enraptured with Kean's performance, that he made his acquaintance on the strength of it, and talked of writing a play, in order that Kean might represent his hero.

As was to be expected, Kean occasionally

relaxed in his endeavours to please the public, and walked through his characters with great nonchalance. We ourselves—who have witnessed, with intense delight, his strenuous exertions in Othello and Richard—have also seen him perform the latter character so disgracefully, as to be hissed repeatedly in the course of the performance. It was in a fit season, therefore (December, 1822), that Mr. Young was invited to join the Drury-Lane Company, and act in concert with him. It roused Kean from his lethargy. He had been for many years without any competitor, and he had been steeped in luxuries of all sorts. When Mr. Young came, with the intention, as many supposed, of contesting the palm with him, Kean saw that something still remained to be done. We ourselves do not think that there was anything like equality between the two actors. Mr. Young was assuredly a gentleman of

pleasing manners, of a good presence, and powerful voice; but he was confessedly a follower of the Kemble school. He did not *originate* a style, nor, as we think, improve one. Comparisons might possibly have been made between John Kemble and Kean, but not between our hero and a *pupil* of John Kemble, except to the disadvantage of the latter. There were, we believe, persons—sincere and intelligent persons, too—who preferred Mr. Young's style of acting to that of Kean. That is very possible; for they might have preferred that particular *manner* or school of acting. But no one, we presume, could stretch his admiration so far, as to venture into a comparison touching the respective *talents* of the two men. In Mr. Campbell's life of Mrs. Siddons, there is a letter from Mr. Young to the poet, referring evidently to Kean's pauses and other peculiarities. We are sorry for this. We think that the letter

is not in the best taste. Mr. Kean had his faults, (and one of them was the habit of pausing too long between his sentences, as everybody knows); but he had, at the same time, a genius decidedly original — great pathos—prodigious vigour; and these qualities redeemed them. Mr. Young had his faults also: we almost forget his redeeming points.

We are unable to state the precise time at which Kean became the tenant of a house, and a few acres of land, in the Isle of Bute. It was generally rumoured that Lord Bute had presented him with an estate there: but this was an error. His Lordship, so far from entertaining any such magnificent notions, received a very ample rent from Kean for the land which the actor occupied. We do not state this in reproach. There existed no necessity whatever for Lord Bute becoming a patron of the Muses or of the Drama, or for his giving

land to a person who was well able to pay for it. Kean rented about twenty acres of very sterile land in the island. The place was damp and forlorn; there was no road to it, and no neighbourhood. Upon the strength of these recommendations, he resolved to build a house upon the ground. He accomplished this at a considerable expense, furnished it, and made a new road to his new mansion. And here, in the year 1823, he retired, to refresh himself after the fatigues and squabbles of a London season. Tired of his triumphs in Richard and Othello; tired of the Red House and the Coal Hole; tired of his parasites, tired of his critics,—good, bad, and indifferent,—the tragedian threw himself into his carriage and four, and rolled merrily to his Bute retirement. But he did not thoroughly enjoy it, we think. He affected to be enraptured now and then with the country; but his habits were not pastoral.

Here is one of his letters to Mr. Phillips (at that time, and always—so long as he remained with him—his faithful friend and secretary)*. It is written, as he asserts, with "*the snuffers*;" and the hard faint characters of the letter, corroborate his statement.

Bute Island, Nov. 14th, 1823.

"DEAR PHILLIPS,

"Mrs. Kean wrote to Elliston on the 8th, telling him that I had not above one week to live. All is well by my keeping away. Dam the Ganges, to prevent further overflow: send to hell the Prometheus that animated the statue: set fire to the Bun Row; and then I will return—at any time very reluctantly—

* Mr. Phillips's letters to Kean—some of which are before us—do him *infinite* credit. Judging of him by these documents (and they are no unfair test of his merits) we would not desire a better secretary. They show him to be intelligent, honest, prudent, and candid; even to his own loss.

for this is the most beautiful place in the world. Write and send me play-bills *every day*. How was the box-plan for the 17th? I can get another doctor's certificate if it is necessary.

"Yours sincerely,

"EDMUND KEAN.

"P. S. Written with the snuffers."

Mr. Phillips, it appears, urged him to return to town, and resume his station at Drury Lane; but Kean had his reasons for remaining. His perpetual anxiety about play-bills shows that, however his body might be in Bute, his soul was still haunting the purlieus of Drury Lane.

"*Bute Island*, 18*th Nov.* 1823.

"Dear Phillips,

"I thank you for your prompt attention. I must differ with you, about my

coming to London: Fabius Maximus conquered, not by fighting a powerful enemy, but by avoiding him. He weakened his resources, and saved the city of Rome.

"I shall not move from this heavenly spot, till Caius Gracchus meets his fate,—till Weare's murderers are hung,—the Christmas pantomime over,—and a general stagnation in public excitement: and *then* —like a hawk I'll pounce upon my prey. Write and send bills, or those penny critiques, *every day!!!*

"Yours most truly

"EDMUND KEAN."

We do not know (or recollect) enough of theatrical politics, to enable us to explain the meaning of our tragedian's classic allusions, in the foregoing letter. Whatever his disputes with managers may have been, he returned to town shortly after the foregoing

letter, for we find him at his old post, at Drury Lane, performing various new characters, with various success.

We have already intimated that it was not our intention to follow Kean through all his characters. Otherwise it would be necessary to advert particularly to Mr. Howard Payne's tragedy of "Brutus" (in which Kean obtained and deserved the most brilliant success); to the "Stranger" — "King John" — "Henry the Fourth and Eighth," (in one of which he was the *Hotspur* and in the other *Wolsey*) —"Jane Shore"—"Venice Preserved" (he was *Jaffier*)—"Massaniello," &c. &c., and also to Mr. Horace Twiss's very effective play of "The Carib Chief."

In these and various other dramas, Kean continued to labour, year after year, with different success. He had at intervals, however, as much relaxation as most men; at least, if his amusements and enjoyments are entitled

to such a name. He worked hard, earned vast sums of money, and spent them to the last penny. With the exception of some gifts to poor actors (we do not know the amount), an annual wherry to the Thames watermen, and an allowance of 50*l.* to his mother, Mrs. Carey*—his earnings were con-

* Mrs. Carey had a daughter (Phœbe Carey) and another son, Harry Darnley, an actor, who used to excite Kean's wrath, by writing letters to him commencing with "Dear Brother." Darnley, we believe, is still living.

We may as well take this opportunity of stating, that persons well acquainted with Kean, still maintain that Miss Tidswell was his mother: and they adduce as reasons, their likeness to each other (about the eyes especially), and the affection that subsisted between them: whereas, say they, there was neither love nor likeness between Kean and Mrs. Carey. If the fact be as is thus supposed, it seems singular that Miss Tidswell should *always* have disavowed the maternity; and that Mrs. Carey should *always* have insisted on it; and that Kean should have made a regular allowance to the latter (giving nothing to the former) up to the period of his death. We have now before us a letter of Mrs. Carey, as recent as 1832, entitling herself his "mother,"

sumed, for the most part, we believe, in matters of personal luxury. His travelling expenses were at all times very great (for

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and thanking him for her allowance, and also for some money which it appears, he had sent to her son Darnley. The following is a copy of it. We have taken no liberties with the original, except in amending the spelling.

"*Friday Sept.* 7. [1832.

"Dear Edmund,

"I wrote to you the first of this month; my quarter's money being due the 1st of September. As I have had no answer I fear you did not get my letter. I am in great anxiety till it comes; and being in ill health makes me feel more. If you can oblige me with two quarters—one due and one in advance—you will render me a very great service; as I may be compelled to remove hastily from the lodging I am now in. I beg you will have the kindness to direct to Mr. Cooper, Surgeon, Great Peter Street,—*for me*, to the *care* of Mr. Cooper.

"I saw Harry yesterday. His looks are mended since last I saw him. I thank God, that you have taken him and his poor chickens under your wing: and I hope you will hold it over them during the winter.

"I think they have merit, which, cheered by your kindness, will show itself.

he always travelled with four horses)—his suppers and "treats" were very frequent, and sometimes upon an extensive scale—and, we suspect that he must have lost and given away large sums, when in a state of intoxication. Indeed, he has more than once started up in the morning and said "Send to Coutts's instantly, and tell them not to pay any cheques this morning. I think that I remember writing some last night,—but I forget what they were." Upon these occasions, the messenger regularly returned with "Messrs. Coutts and Co.'s compliments, and are sorry

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"Mrs. Darnley is clever in Scotch and Irish characters.

"Your affectionate Mother,

"M. A. CAREY.

"I am in a strange state of health. Two days before I saw Harry, every one thought I could not live the night through. I am sorry that I live to trouble my dear child; and yet I cannot wish to die.—*Let me see you.*"

to inform Mr. Kean that two or three cheques of 50*l.*, or 100*l.*, or 200*l.*," [as the case might be] "were paid soon after 9 o'clock this morning."

His attachments to "the fair sex"— some of which might be innocent enough—were numerous. They occupied a good deal of his thoughts, and abstracted some of his money. It was a curious feature in these *égaremens*, that they all commenced with one love letter. He had *a circular*, in fact, which he despatched to the successive objects of his affection, and which, we must suppose, was couched in irresistible terms. The original has not been preserved; and, indeed, were it in our possession, we should be cautious of promulgating a "Sesame" that has succeeded in opening so many female hearts.

It is not a part of our purpose to enter into any detail of the tragedian's love affairs. It is better that they should rest in obscurity.

But his intercourse with Mrs. Cox, was a fact of such notoriety, and was connected so intimately with the downfal of his character and fortunes, that it cannot be altogether passed over. We shall, however, touch upon it as slightly as possible.

Rumours had been for some time afloat, respecting some transaction in which Kean was implicated. Paragraphs, referring to a "celebrated tragedian," and to "the wife of a well-known alderman," and to "the gentlemen of the long robe," &c. gave rise to much speculation, for a time; but at last, the newspapers soared out of mysteries into matter of fact, and stated plainly that proceedings were in contemplation, or had actually been commenced, against Kean, at the suit of Mr. Alderman Cox.

It was about this time, that Kean visited the Continent for the second time. He traversed parts of France and Switzerland, and,

crossing the Great St. Bernard, set foot for the first and last time on the plains of Italy. His halt at the convent seems to have been as agreeable to the monks as to himself. He ate, drank, talked, laughed, and played upon the spinnet, to their prodigious satisfaction. They spoke of the delight which he gave them, to many subsequent travellers; and he —charmed with their hospitality and good humour—inscribed on their book, that he had there passed "the happiest day of his life." It may here be mentioned, that Kean, when he travelled from place to place, was generally accompanied by his man Miller, and a multitude of books. Miller was fond of liquor (like his master), but he was not literary; and therefore, all that he took note of was, whether the tragedian, on quitting each place of halting, had his proper complement of books. If they commenced the journey with fifty volumes, they were certain to have

the full number when they returned home. But in regard to the individual books, that was another matter. The campaign opened, probably, with some serious works,—Gibbon and Hume—the Spectator and Adventurer—Locke on the Understanding, Shakspeare, a Bible, a Prayer Book, and a volume of Lectures on the Belles Lettres or Theology. Half of these would disappear in the course of their march, and, in the room of the deserters, Kean would discover recruits collected from almost every inn where he had slept. At one place he would find that he had gained the Racing Calendar; at a second, the True History of Betty Careless; at a third, three volumes of the Annual Register, and a squadron of the Gentleman's Magazine;—and so on.

On his return homewards, by Paris, from his continental tour, Kean was once more greeted by Talma. He saw the great French

actor in one or two of his parts; but he did not stop long in Paris. The trial, in which he was so deeply concerned, was now approaching, and he took his way towards England; stopping one night, however, at Boulogne, to act for the benefit of Penley's company. Mr. Grattan, who encountered him at this period, states that he was (or seemed) quite confident of obtaining a verdict in his favour.

At last, however, on the 17th of January, 1825, the cause (Cox *v.* Kean) came on for trial. The reader, who may be curious on this subject, must refer to the evidence which was published, and adjust the merits or demerits of the parties in his own way. A mass of correspondence was brought forward, and the crime proved; and the result was, a verdict for 800*l.* against Edmund Kean. What secret defence or excuse he might have had, cannot now be known: but the consequences

of the disclosure were almost fatal to his fortunes. The people were exasperated against him in an extraordinary degree; and, when he appeared on the Drury Lane boards, they would not allow him to be heard. At Edinburgh they hooted him from the stage; and, although he eventually succeeded in appeasing the London audiences, there was no thorough reconciliation between the parties. A few critics interfered in his behalf—Elliston (his manager) shook hands with him on the stage, and made a speech in his favour—and, at last, the tragedian himself obtained a hearing, and spoke as follows:—

"If you expect from me a vindication of my private conduct, I fear I shall be unable to furnish one to your satisfaction. I stand before you as the representative of Shakspeare's heroes.—('No doubt,' 'hear him,' and expressions of disapprobation.)—The errors I

have committed have been scanned by a public tribunal.—(Considerable interruption.) In that investigation feelings of delicacy prevented the disclosure of circumstances which might have changed the complexion of the case.—(Renewed interruption.)—This proceeded from feelings for others, not for myself. ('Bravo!')—It appears that I stand before you, Ladies and Gentlemen, at this moment, a professional victim. I apprehend that this is not done by your verdict. If it is done by a hostile Press, I shall endeavour to withstand it—if it is your verdict, I shall bow to your decision, remember with gratitude your former favours, and leave you."

Upon the conclusion of this speech, Kean bowed repeatedly, and was finally led off the stage by Elliston; leaving the audience pacified, if not altogether satisfied, by his address. In the course of time, he regained, in some

degree, the ear of the public; but he failed in reinstating himself in his old position; and, he, therefore, gladly accepted an engagement to pay a second visit to America.

CHAPTER X.

AN ALTERED MAN — A YOUNG ACTOR — A NIGHT EXCURSION — QUARRELS BETWEEN A FATHER AND HIS SON — KEAN'S DECLINE — HIS LAST PERFORMANCE — RECONCILIATION WITH HIS FAMILY — HIS ILLNESS AND DEATH.

AFTER a stay of two seasons in the United States, Kean returned once more to his native country. During his absence *, he had acquired considerable sums of money. His offences had had time to sink into oblivion.

* It was during this visit to America, that Kean was elected chief of a tribe of Huron Indians, by the name of *Alantenouidet*. He rejoiced in this character; and in order to vindicate his title to it, he rode a wild horse, drank rum, and disfigured himself with paint and the skins of beasts, till his European pretensions were altogether lost sight of.

The public had grown less moral, or more charitable; and his friends and admirers had employed themselves with effect, in smoothing the way for his favourable reception. But the spirit that shone out formerly, and lighted up with its terrible fires, the tyranny of Richard, and the jealous madness of "The Moor," was now almost extinct. "Reputation, Iago, reputation,"—had been the object of the actor's worship, far beyond what he himself had known. His vanity had been fed by popular applause. The public favour had been the step on which his ambition had mounted; and now—all this was gone. He returned an altered (but not a wiser) man. Disgrace had driven its iron into his soul. Excesses of all sorts had shaken and wasted him; and he, who once could throw a sommerset with any posture-master at Astley's, and who actually had "fought a good fight" with an opponent of the Gas-man, was scarcely

able now to go through the common labour of a play.

In keeping with this infirmity of his body, were the infirmities of his mind. He lost his memory; and grew suspicious, sullen, vindictive, and, even in money matters, illiberal. The expenses of his son, who was at Eton, (they were merely the ordinary school expenses,) troubled him: the small allowance of 200*l.* per annum to his wife was a source of disquiet. Yet he was, at this time, in the receipt of several thousand pounds a year, and was profuse in his personal expenses. He could still act his old parts, but he was unable to master a new one. He forgot the words almost as soon as he acquired them. His old acquaintance, Mr. Grattan, wrote a play expressly for him,—*Ben Nazir*. He accepted it with alacrity; studied it; and deceived himself (and the author) into a notion of his being perfect in

it: but on the first night of its representation, he drew down damnation upon it, by his own single and unsupported imbecility *.

To add to his annoyances, his son had already began to show some talent for the stage. A rational person, in Kean's situation, would perhaps have been pleased with this. But he was resolved, he said, to be the first and last tragedian of the name of Kean.

We must here retrace our steps a little; and recall a circumstance that happened previously to Kean's second expedition to America.—One night, when the boy Charles had been exhibiting before his mother, and stirring up her maternal pride by the merits of his acting, Kean suddenly returned home. His brow was very moody. He had been playing Richard, and had come home in

* Mr. Grattan's account of this matter, which is very curious and graphic, will be found in the Notes to this Volume.

part of the Crook-back's dress. The "trunks" were still on him, the wig, and part of the paint: the rest had been rubbed off with a rough towel. He rang the bell, called for brandy and water, and threw himself at full length on the sofa. To soothe the angry spirit, and to excite a little admiration, perhaps, for the boy, Mrs. Kean said: "Do you know that Charles can act? and, really, very well." "*Indeed!*"—was the tragedian's answer:—the tone was a little sarcastic. "Yes," returned the mother, "he can; and you shall see him." And, accordingly, Charles began. His acting was, we are told, very clever; but it did not provoke a word from his father. *He* continued to lie on the sofa: he looked at the boy;—listened,—and, when all was over, said: "There—that will do very well. Go along! Good night. It is time to go to bed. No more—a—*acting*, Charles."

When the boy had retired, Kean broke out:—"That boy will be an actor, if he tries; and if he *should*," added he with an emphasis, "I'll cut his throat!" Mrs. Kean interfered — remonstrated — talked of other things—and tried different methods of allaying his agitation. The tragedian, however, continued drinking his brandy and water—glass after glass—stronger and stronger. He muttered—he swore—"The name of Kean shall die with *me*. It shall be buried in my coffin." At last,—after various palliatives, he became more composed, and Mrs. Kean retired to her bed-room; leaving the perturbed spirit, as she supposed, quiet for the night. But the fates had ordered otherwise. For, after the lapse of an hour, as she says, "a great thumping in the house" saluted her ears. She got up, in some alarm, and inquired the cause. A servant (Miller, we believe, the book collector) answered, that

he had been ordered to get ready his master's clothes, for that he was "going out." This was about three o'clock in the morning. A hackney coach was sent for, and duly arrived; and into it were put the tragedian's portmanteau, some of his books, a bottle of brandy, his pistols, and two lighted candles (one in each pocket of the coach). He himself, ready to get in, seized his little spaniel (Portia) by the neck, and, in the spirit of Shylock, threw her into the coach. He then followed in *propriâ personâ*, telling his man to mount the box. "And where shall we drive to, sir?" asked the man. "To hell!" was the master's answer. "Very well, sir," answered the servitor, and gave directions accordingly. The coachman, however, proceeded to the Thames instead of to the Styx, and stopped at Waterloo Bridge for further orders. "I'll get out here," said Kean. "Wait both of you till I return. I

shall be back in five minutes." They waited accordingly the five minutes—fifty minutes; they waited all night—in vain! The tragedian did not return. But when the grey dawn began to warm into absolute day, the coach, the brandy, and the books, Portia and the pistols, and the rest of the lumber, live and dead, were duly taken back to "the place from whence they came;" and the coachman concluded his labours by demanding, with the air of a person privy to an important mystery, a guinea for his fare! Thus ended one of our hero's many farces of "Much Ado about Nothing;" and thus began his—what shall we call it—hostility?—to his son. It is not to be imagined, of course, that Kean was jealous of his son's acting; but simply, that it seemed to thwart a desire of his own, that the boy should never addict himself to the stage.

Things, however, did not always terminate

in farce: they sometimes took the tone of tragedy. The "acting" of Charles was remembered ever afterwards. The son, indeed, did not repeat his performances, nor did he manifest any intention of going upon the stage; but when differences arose (about the time of the Cox trial) between his parents, he "clave" to his mother, as the injured party, and as his best and tenderest friend. Kean—although no disrespect was ever shown towards him by his son,—although (as we have said) that son showed no wilfulness towards the stage,—and although his own income was competent to maintain his family sumptuously,—estranged himself from the mother and the child. And when Mr. Calcraft proposed obtaining for Charles Kean a cadetship to India, his father resolved that he should go. At this period, Kean had separated himself from his wife, who lived on an allowance of 200*l.* per

annum, in Rider Street, St. James's. Charles Kean was at school. But the offer of the cadetship induced Mrs. Kean (then very ill, and menaced with the loss of her annuity) to require his presence in town. He came accordingly, and touched by her distress at the prospect of losing him, took her objections into consideration. Kean himself, at the first offer, decided that his son should accept the cadetship; but the son, having some of the same resolute metal which his father possessed, and a little more prudence, made up his mind to refuse Mr. Calcraft's offer, *unless* Kean would promise to settle 300*l.* per annum on his mother for three years. "If my father will do this," said he to Mr. Calcraft, "I will go; but I will not leave my mother sick and helpless, as she now is, without some assurance of support." Kean refused to accede to this proposal, and immediately threw his son penniless upon the world;

stating that he had rejected an eligible offer, and that he must now provide for himself.

Now, when it is considered that the boy was only sixteen years old; that he had been, thus far, tenderly brought up; that he had been educated in the idea of possessing a large fortune (for this his father at *all* times impressed upon him); that he was utterly incompetent to follow any trade or profession; and that his only offence was seeking to make sure (for his own mother) a little stipend that was then *very* precarious; it must be admitted, we think, that his destiny was a hard one.

On Charles Kean's refusal, his father sent for him to the Hummums, where he was then staying. "You are aware," said he, coldly, "that, in refusing this cadetship, you give *me* up?" [This to a school-boy of sixteen years of age!] "I am sorry for it, sir," was the reply, "but I can't think

that you are so angry as you say." "Well," returned the father, "I'll send you back to Eton until the end of this half-year, and *then*—you must shift for yourself." And *he did.* For, after that "half-year," Kean never allowed *sixpence* to his son for his support. In this emergency, the boy—bewildered and without money—consulted the few friends he had, and finally, by their advice, and in order to procure *bread,* threw himself upon the stage.—FLOREAT!

Years passed on, and, with the exception of one or two casual encounters at provincial theatres, the father and the son never met. The one went on, from season to season, reaping his golden harvest; the other also went on, struggling for a pittance; subjected to severe strictures and unjust comparisons; and enduring reproaches, as having (from mere wilfulness and disobedience) flown into the face of his father and rejected his affectionate counsel.

But it is needless to linger in this part of our history. If the conduct of Kean ever excited harsh feelings or rebellious thoughts, in the mind of his child, *Death*, the great conqueror, has quelled them.

We have now arrived at that period of our hero's story, where there is little, save what is painful, to speak of. We will hasten, therefore, to its conclusion.

Kean never recovered his strength or spirits after the unhappy trial. Had his health served him, indeed, he would probably have thought poorly enough of the moral indignation of a people, who rejected him for the same fault that induced them afterwards to take a pretty actress to their hearts; but, as it was, his disgrace drove him to the bottle (always too much his friend) for solace, and his physical and mental qualifications began evidently and rapidly to decline. He tried temperance (by fits), country air, and, eventually became

proprietor of the Richmond theatre, and made that village his place of residence.

It was evident to all persons that he was sinking. He might have weathered the storm considerably longer, without doubt, had he husbanded his strength; but his profusion required money for its support, and the habits of a life of excitement could not easily be laid aside. He continued to act, therefore, and acting produced exhaustion; and exhaustion was remedied by drinking. He went through his parts with difficulty. His limbs possessed no longer their elasticity. His spirits were depressed; and he had lost every thing but the old enthusiasm for his art, which raised him from the humblest condition, to the summit of (histrionic) renown. At a time when some of the public prints were jesting as to his infirmities (supposing them to be fictitious), we ourselves can testify to their reality. It

must have been nearly two years previous to his death, when we went behind the scenes of Covent Garden Theatre. He was playing Richard the Third. No one, in *front* of the curtain, perceived any diminution in his vigour. But behind! There was the last of the Plantagenets, sitting at one of the side-scenes, panting, flushed, and bent almost double by exhaustion. A servant stood by his chair, with a goblet of brandy-and-water (evidently *very* strong) in his hand. It had lost some of its heat, and the tragedian impatiently ordered another to be brought, "stronger, and very hot." In a minute afterwards, the call-boy required his presence on the stage, and there he was accordingly, apparently as vigorous and active as ever, and bringing down from boxes and galleries repeated acclamations. The scene terminated, and we saw him again a drooping, panting, and exhausted man.

We shall pass over some circumstances that occurred during his residence at Richmond (where he was the dupe of a sordid and artful woman, and suffered accordingly), and come at once to his last performance of Othello.

It appears that Kean and his son had been reconciled, by the interference of a friend who wished well to both, and that they had acted together occasionally in country theatres. They never, however, played together before a London audience, until that memorable night, when the great tragedian,—struggling still for another triumph,—was finally borne away exhausted from the stage. Mr. Charles Kean, having returned from America (where he had been sojourning for two or three years) in February, 1833, Laporte, then manager of the Covent Garden theatre, wisely thought that the appearance of the father and son, in conjunction, was likely to attract money to his almost empty treasury. He accordingly

made engagements with them, and it was agreed that they should come out in "Othello," Charles representing Iago, and Kean, as usual, filling the part of the Moor.

There was no rehearsal, nor any arrangement between them as to the mode of play; but when the son arrived at the theatre in the evening, he was told that his father desired to see him. He went accordingly to his dressing-room, and found him shivering and exceedingly weak. "I am very ill," said he; "I am afraid that I shall not be able to act." Mr. Charles Kemble, who was present, cheered him up: but to provide against the worst, a servant was desired to air a dress, (such as Othello wears), in order that Mr. Warde might take up the part, in case Kean should actually break down, before the conclusion of the play. The play commenced. After the first scene, Kean observed, "Charles is getting on to night,—He's acting very

well. "I suppose that's because he is acting with me." He himself was very feeble. He was, however, persuaded to proceed, and brandy-and-water was administered to him as usual. By this help, he went on pretty well till the commencement of the third act; but, before the drop curtain rose, he said to his son, "Mind, Charles, that you keep before me. Don't get behind me, in this act. I don't know that I shall be able to kneel; but if I do, be sure that you lift me up." Still, he pursued his way, without faltering. He went off with Desdemona; and no one observed any change. But on entering, where he says, "What! false to *me*," &c., he was scarcely able to walk across the stage. He held up, however, until the celebrated "farewell," which he uttered with all his former pathos, but on concluding it,—after making one or two feeble steps towards his son (who

took care to be near him) and attempting the speech "Villain, be sure," &c., — his head sank on his son's shoulder, and the tragedian's acting was at an end. He was able to groan out a few words, in Charles's ear— "I am dying — speak to them for me;" after which (the audience refusing, in kindness, to hear any apology), he was borne from the stage. His son, assisted by other persons, carried him to his dressing-room, and laid him on the sofa. He was as cold as ice; his pulse was scarcely perceptible and he was unconscious of all that was going on around him. In this state, he remained some time, when the remedies which were applied having restored him to his senses, he was taken to "The Wrekin" tavern, near the theatre, and Messrs. Carpué and Duchez (the surgeons) were sent for.

From "The Wrekin" he was, after a week's stay, removed to Richmond, still very

weak and ill, but without any apprehensions being entertained of immediate danger. At Richmond, he continued to improve a little in health, and was even enabled to go out in his carriage. One day, however, having stayed out longer than usual, (he had been to visit Miss Tidswell) and the weather being unusually cold, he came home exceedingly ill. He said that he had got his death-blow; asked for brandy, which he drank, (saying, however, that it made him colder),—and went to bed. This was the last time that he left his house. He grew gradually worse; reviving at times, however, sufficiently to speak of old times, and to talk on the subject of acting. In one of these intervals, he wrote the following letter to his wife:—

"*Thursday.*

"MY DEAR MARY,

"Let us be no longer fools. Come home. *Forget* and *forgive!* If I have erred, it

was my head, not my heart, and most severely have I suffered for it. My future life shall be employed in contributing to your happiness; and you, I trust, will return that feeling, by a total obliteration of the past.

"Your wild,

"But really affectionate husband,

"EDMUND KEAN.

"*Theatre Royal,*
Richmond."

Mrs. Kean answered this appeal by proceeding at once to Richmond. She saw her husband once more, after seven years of estrangement, and the most complete forgiveness and reconciliation followed. She went again to him repeatedly, and the best understanding prevailed between them. All this was the work of their son.

Kean was now in the most alarming state. His strength (except when raised, for a short

time, by powerful stimulants,) was almost gone. He refused all food: and the small portions which he unconsciously took, and which consisted of glazed beef and the strong juices of meats, were administered as medicine. Under this idea, he was prevailed upon to take a little sustenance. He drank brandy: sometimes he would drink too much, and then he grew half delirious: and at others, when he abstained from it altogether, an apathy seemed to overspread his faculties, such as often precedes death.

In his better intervals, however (for he had a few), his mind still recurred to the subject of acting and actors; and he remembered—not without pleasure—his former triumphs. With his bed always covered with books—Shakspeare, Gibbon, Rollin, an Atlas, &c. and (*under* the others) his Bible and a Missal—he would still turn back to the stage, and show his son how Garrick and

Barry had acted Lear. (Sir George Beaumont had formerly explained their manner of playing to him.) And then he would give, in his own fashion, that tenderest of all tender passages: "Pray do not mock me," &c., where Lear, awakening from his madness, recognises at last his true Cordelia. Nothing could exceed the effect of this, recited as it was under such circumstances. This, it may be said, was the last act of the actor's life. He grew rapidly worse; although he had his ebbs and flows, and was tenacious of life, to the end. At one time, he was given over: his pulse announced speedy death; but he rallied a little, drank brandy, and (in the absence of those who watched him) crawled out of bed, covered himself with a racoon's skin, and, by some extraordinary efforts, dragged himself into the next room. He was found there, drinking and attempting to smoke a cigar, and was

prevailed upon to return to his bed, from which he never afterwards arose. During the last hours of his existence he was almost insensible; and on the fifteenth day of May, 1833, he quitted "the stage" of life without consciousness or pain.

Thus died Edmund Kean—an actor of great original genius. Of his faults we have spoken sufficiently in the course of this narrative: let us here, briefly, recapitulate his merits. As a tragedian, he was decidedly of the very first order. He possessed vigour, pathos, sarcasm, and the power of communicating terror in the highest degree. He was (notwithstanding the disadvantages of his figure) very graceful; and his intensity in expressing all the passions has never been approached, within our recollection. That he was too abrupt, and occasionally exhibited the bright points of a character instead of the whole, may be admitted; but even this reproach does not

apply to his Richard the Third, to his Shylock, to his Sir Giles Overreach, nor (above all) to his Othello. Whoever has heard his passionate interrogatories in Shylock; or witnessed his remorse (or relenting) towards Ophelia, in Hamlet; or his battle in Richard; the last scene of his Sir Giles; or the third act of his Othello, will not easily forget him. The touching tenderness which he threw into the character of the Moor still rings in our ears. His utterance of one line—

"O, Desdemona! away—away—away!"

was never surely surpassed. It had in it all that belongs to love, to grief, to pity. The very *Spirit* of love, weeping its injuries, and not more than half reproachful, seemed to hover over him. His words sunk, by gentle gradations, from reproof into compassion; from compassion into a faint, tender, and and indistinct sound; which itself gradually

expired, like the sound of a melancholy echo.

As a man, Kean, with all his faults, possessed some redeeming points. He had an independent spirit: ("He was proud, in his way.") He gave away large sums of money to his fellow-actors in distress. He exerted himself for charities. He stood up for the cause of his profession. If his faults be retorted upon us, we may reply that his unchecked childhood was of itself sufficient to extenuate many errors; that years of penury and suffering should also be taken into the account, in his favour; and that the sudden and almost unparalleled fortune that met him, and lifted him, in a moment, from obscurity and want to the very summit of prosperity and fame, was such as scarcely any man, with the common weakness of humanity, could have encountered, without rendering himself liable to some little reproach.

NOTES TO VOLUME II.

NOTE A. (p. 35.)

THE following account of Kean's first appearance is extracted from a Paper in the New Monthly Magazine for May 1834, written, we believe, by Mr. Leman Rede. His statement differs little in effect from our own; but it is very pleasantly given, and we do not think that we should do well were we to withhold it from the reader.

"Though, only the day previous to his appearance, he had received a letter from his theatrical friends advising him against his rash attempt—though Mr. Knight had volunteered his opinion that 'Mr. Kean had better pass his evenings in the front, trying to improve himself by witnessing the performance of good actors'—though Mr. Rae had passed him in the hall without recognising him—though the committee had said '*he* could not do' —though a certain set of underlings had christened him, in their jocularity, 'Mr. Arnold's hard-bargain,' Kean was not *actually* dispirited: stung in heart and mind he certainly was; but the night before his appearance he said, 'Let me once set my foot before the float (*i. e.* the stage-lights), and I'll let them see what I am.' In fact, he had one great attribute of genius—its irrepressibility: all real and all imagined slights (and he was always too apt to imagine the existence of neglect towards him)

only confirmed his resolution; he did not come there merely to appear, he came there to succeed; he relied on his own powers and on the public judgment, and the little, submissive, meek, and frightened man that had rehearsed Shylock was wholly lost when he assumed the gaberdine and beard. Very little interest appeared to be excited in the theatre; at the call of 'last music,' *i. e.* the commencement of the overture, the first peeper through the curtain announced the fact of its being a 'shy domus,' which was replied to by 'What did you expect? there'll be nothing till half-price;' intimating that the pantomime might attract, but the new tragedian would not. On went Rae as Bassanio, in an especial ill-humour, and the early scenes of the play were altogether enacted with a listless and careless spirit. At last, the prompter gave the word 'No. 3' to the call-boy, and he went to the green-room to call Shylock to his duty; but Shylock was not in the green-room, and hadn't been there: the boy went up to the dressing-room that had been allotted to the 'new gentleman'—he was not there. Somewhat alarmed at this irregularity, the call-boy was hurrying back to report the fact, when he saw Shylock standing ready at the place at which he was to make his entrance; as in duty bound, the young functionary said 'You're called, Sir.' 'Thank you,' was the reply; and those were the only words (save those of Shakspeare) that Kean uttered that night, until the end of the fourth act, Shylock's last scene. Stage-fright (which has been compared to sea-sickness) he certainly did not suffer from; he dreaded the green-room

more than a thousand audiences; the pent-up hopes of years were now too near fulfilment for him to know the 'taste of fear.' Scene 3rd, Act I.—Shylock and Bassanio entered; his reception was cordial, not rapturous; he acknowledged it rather slightly, and began: the wings (*i. e.* stage entrances) were not over-crowded, though it is common for the actors to come to see a new one's first scene; however, 'come one, come all,'—it mattered little then; 'he *had* got his foot to the float.' Kean began to bestir himself the instant Bassanio left the stage; the scene went well, and as the act fell, a comedian who had been looking on went into the green-room—a comedian who is himself, in his peculiar walk, an admirable actor—and addressing some one who had just entered, said, 'I say! he's got a *black* wig and beard; did *you* ever see Shylock in a black wig?' This is not quoted as an instance of ill-nature, for it was not said in that spirit, but as a proof of what a slight impression had been made on the mind of the actor in question by the new tragedian. Shylock does not re-appear until Scene 4 in the second act; and, of course, it was expected Kean would have gone into the green-room. Hollow as the professions might have been, had he done so he would there have been congratulated on his success; for badly as the actors of the theatre royal, Drury-lane, might be suspected of wishing towards the interloper, they would not have been wanting in such an outward mark of decency; but Kean prowled about behind the scenes, didn't require the attention of the call-boy, but was at his post when wanted. In his

speech to Jessica (Mrs. Bland) he was much applauded, and the audience had become extremely attentive, which was particularly shown by their approbation at his exit in this scene, when their plaudits must be considered rather as a sign of their general satisfaction than as extorted by his delivery of

> 'Safe bind, safe find,—
> A proverb never stale in thrifty mind.'

"Act III. commenced, Bassanio, Antonio, and Gratiano, and, in fact, all the characters save Shylock, Tubal, Salarino, and Salanio, were quietly seated in the green-room, when the dread rumble of reiterated plaudits burst on their ears—'Again! again!! *What* could it be?' not '*Who* could it be?' for of that there was now no doubt. The green-room was cleared in an instant, and every character was at the wing to look at 'the little man in the *black* wig,' who was raging like a lion in the great scene with Tubal: the applause was, considering the scanty number of the audience, prodigious; as Oxberry very drolly said, 'How the devil so few of them kicked up such a row was marvellous!' At the end of this scene Kean ran up stairs to the room where he had dressed to avoid his congratulators, and in the deep recesses of his own proud heart bury his joys. It appeared to those who were unused to Kean's enunciation, that he had become hoarse from exertion, but in fact he was never in better voice. However, after him went Messrs. Raymond and Arnold, one bearing negus and the other oranges; and believe me, 'my pensive pub-

lic,' the fact of those great functionaries having done this proves that the impression he had made was by no means a slight one. The trial scene (though highly applauded) was rather an anti-climax in effect: such, in fact, it always was, for his scene with Salanio and Tubal was so overwhelming, that nothing could exceed it. Shylock ends in the fourth act, and before the play was over, Kean had left the theatre."

The following observations occur in the same paper. We copy them at the risk of their being thought out of place in this present note.

"When the author of 'Childe Harold' said he had been compared to Kean, he was perhaps unaware of the fact that Kean in many things aped him: unless, indeed, which is most probably the fact, they had the common nature of men who possess great powers, but not great souls, and who, acting continually on immediate impulses, and ever mystifying their motives to the million, present a mass of incongruities, and, however they may profess the contrary, inwardly rejoice in doing so. Byron and Kean equally mistook notoriety for fame; they were neither of them so anxious to win the wise as to sway the many; in their ambition to be mob-leaders they were, in fact, *mob-led;* they pandered to the taste they wished to govern; and whilst, in the aggregate, they succumbed to the opinions of the vulgar, they would occasionally diverge in detail, merely to show their independence of spirit. Kean cared less for delineating human nature than he did for making a point tell; and never asked what sort of a *character* he

was to represent, but what sort of a *part* he was to play — not what individual he should delineate, but what effects he should produce. King Lear was to him only an admirable medium of obtaining applause, and valued in proportion to that applause. He is reported to have said (during the illness of George III., when that play was interdicted) that the public had never seen what he could do, nor would they, until they saw him over the dead body of Cordelia. Yet, when the accession of George IV. enabled him to appear as Lear, he was content to play it according to Nahum Tate's version. Some years afterwards, when Hazlitt's essays, and Hazlitt's advice and remonstrance had aroused him, he persuaded the Drury-lane management to restore the fifth act of Shakspeare; it was thus played a few nights, but the effect (!) was not equal to his expectations, and he relinquished Shakspeare, and resumed Tate's tragedy. Had he really thought of the divine bard's drama as 'the sacred page he was to expound' (his own powerful expression), and not as a means by which he should gain ephemeral applause, he would have insisted on the restoration of every line of that matchless and wonderful tragedy; above all, he would have made it a *sine quâ non* that the part of the Fool should be restored; but no, that might mar, could not aid, the individual effects to be produced by Kean in King Lear. Alas! alas! from Garrick to Kemble, and from Cooke to Kean, the same story. Your mere actor has no care for the fame of author, living or dead. Garrick had a volume of Shakspeare *buried* with him — Garrick, who

had countenanced mutilations in all his acting dramas that will remain as monuments of his ignorance and chicanery, when all recollections of the excellence of the actor have faded."

Note B. (p. 134.)

The Cup presented to Kean was made after the celebrated Warwick Vase. The following is the newspaper account of the transaction:—

"Yesterday Mr. Kean received from the hands of Mr. Palmer (the father of the Drury-Lane Stage), the magnificent Cup, which the Committee and the performers awarded him for his admirable performance of *Sir Giles Overreach*. The ceremony took place at two o'clock, on the Stage. After reading the names of the donors and the subscribers, viz.:—

"The Right Hon. Lord Byron, Hon. Douglas Kinnaird, Hon. G. Lambe, S. Davies, Esq., Chandos Leigh, Esq., Messrs. Pope, Oxberry, Palmer, Dibdin, Rae, Wewitzer, Harley, Knight, Powell, Braham, Pyne, Hughes, Wyatt, G. Smith, Peake: Madame Storace, Mrs. Billington, Miss Kelly, Mrs. Bland, Mrs. Sparks, Mrs. Mardyn, Mrs. Orger, and others of the Drury-Lane corps, amounting to upwards of 50 persons,

"Mr. Palmer addressed Mr. Kean as follows:—

"To make any individual comment, after what has been unanimously expressed in the donation, would be superfluous; but, believe this, you cannot feel more satisfaction in receiving the Cup, than I have pleasure in presenting it, by the desire of the Ladies and Gentle-

men whose names are here subscribed. Permit me to give you this Cup, wishing you health, happiness, and long life to enjoy it."

MR. KEAN'S REPLY.

"Gentlemen—If I ever lamented a want of eloquence it is on the present occasion, when I feel how incapable I am to reply to my friends in the glowing and brilliant language they have used. I cannot but lament my deficiency, and express my pleasurable feelings in the dictates of my heart. Gentlemen, it is not hyperbole when I declare that this moment is the proudest of my existence in public favour. There has been, there is, there will be those, that hold an equal, perhaps superior share; but the superiority I have gained in the attachment of my brother professionals, I will resign to no one. It has ever been my study to maintain *their* good opinion, and this token of regard I proudly conceive a testimony of the success of my endeavours. As true feeling, I humbly consider, can be expressed in few words, I shall endeavour to be as brief as possible; but I must be deemed insensible if I did not express how fully I appreciate the honour conferred on me in the presence now, and past attentions of Mr. PALMER, the *Father of the Stage.* A certain prejudice generally exists in favour of early impressions, particularly the veteran who can remember the old and acknowledged superior school;—the respect they owe the memories of a GARRICK, BARRY, and CIBBER, makes them consider them always alive and

present; consequently I must say, the approbation of a man who has trod the boards with those whose fame must live for ever, is the *ne plus ultra* of dramatic commendation. Still, I say, I should receive this truly valuable donation with diffidence, did not my heart whisper me, that my professional success but gratifies me so far as it procures me the means of serving those who may not be equally fortunate; nor can envy, however violent against me, confute a bold asseveration—*Exulto non mutando.* I conclude, Gentlemen, with offering you, individually and all, my sincere thanks, assuring you, that it shall always be my study to preserve your good wishes, and that the action of this hour is engraven on my heart, and lives there *memoriâ in eternâ.*"—[26*th June*, 1816.]

Note C. (p. 182.)

The following were the inscriptions on the sword presented to Kean by his Edinburgh admirers; to which is added, his Letter to Sir John Sinclair, acknowledging his receipt of the present.

INSCRIPTIONS ON THE SWORD.—ON THE FRONT, IN THE CENTRE.

To Edmund Kean, Esq.
As a tribute of admiration
To his splendid talents,
From
His Friends at
Edinburgh.

ON THE OTHER SIDE, IN THE CENTRE.

This sword was presented
To
EDMUND KEAN, Esq.
To be worn by him
When he appears on the Stage
As
"Macbeth,
"King of Scotland,"
November, 1819.

MR. KEAN'S ANSWER.

"SIR—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, announcing the transmission of a valuable Sword, which you teach me to receive as a token of the flattering estimation, in which my professional exertions in the Northern Capital, are held by yourself, and a portion of that Public, to whose fostering indulgence I am already bound in lasting gratitude.

"To those unknown patrons, in whose names you have been pleased in such gratifying terms to address me, I beg you will convey the assurance that their kindness has not been lavished where it is not truly appreciated and deeply felt.

"I am happy in the conviction, that I shall only do justice to their intentions in receiving this Sword, as at once a record of national liberality and a pledge of Scottish patronage of the Stage. May I not recognise in this their object, by the selection of the distinguished pen, which has honoured me with this commendation, as well as in the costume of the present itself, which

you are pleased to inform me, is strictly national, both in its character and in its ornaments?

"Permit me to add, Sir, that my own feelings could know no higher gratification than to be instructed to the belief, that I may have been the fortunate instrument of increasing the number of the patrons of our Art, the difficulties of which may, in some measure, be appreciated by the rarity and instability of success, and in which we but too sensibly feel, how necessary is public protection to encourage and sustain us even in our least chequered and unclouded career.—I have the honour to be, Sir, with grateful respect, your very obliged Servant,

"E. KEAN."

"To the Right Hon. Sir J. Sinclair, &c. &c."

NOTE D. (p. 193.)

The following papers will explain the reason of KEAN'S quitting America earlier than he originally intended. The first letter, it will be observed, was written before his unlucky visit to Boston; the second after his visit, but before he had ascertained the *extent* of the feeling which prevailed against him in America, and the third (the 'Farewell') afterwards:—

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM MR. KEAN TO A FRIEND IN ENGLAND.

"New York, 20th May, 1821.

"My brilliant career in this country induces me to yield to the importunities of the Public, and stay with them another twelvemonth. In doing this my friends in England will, I hope, conceive I make no slight

sacrifice of feeling, for whatever may be my gratitude and admiration of a land that has so liberally adopted me, there is a certain charm about the character of Englishman I would not forego for all the wealth of gold mines. There is much for the impartial observer to admire in America; for the philosopher an ample field of research; for the artist the most desirable encouragement and protection. With such conspicuous beauties in the picture as these, the liberal connoisseur must overlook the ruggedness and shading of adolescence. My professional engagements terminate for the summer at Boston on the 1st of June. I shall then seek the grand points of observation—the falls of Niagara, the Lakes, the Canadas; and what my romantic fancy paints more interesting, the Indians. If you will allow me, I will write a full account of the tour; I promise myself a great deal of pleasure and improvement from it; and I need not say I hope, what pleasure I shall have in communicating to you any thing that will be of the least interest. If you will do me the favour of acknowledging the receipt of this, it will find me in New York, previous to my departure. I am quite rejoiced at the flourishing condition of Drury Lane, not only as it it connected with my feelings and ambition, but from the great regard I entertain for Mr. Elliston, to whom I conceive myself under the most essential obligations. I hope that my return to Drury-Lane will be a circumstance as profitable to him as gratifying to myself, as I still am vain enough to think my countrymen will be glad to see me."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK NATIONAL ADVOCATE.

"1*st June* 1821.

"SIR—As I have yet some months to remain in this country, it is my earnest wish to preserve the good opinion of those friends who have so generously and nobly manifested their approbation of my character and talents. As the servant of the public, I am aware that I am amenable to public opinion and censure; and if the public voice declare that I have been in error, I am ready to apologise with all due submission. But, Sir, is it not extraordinary, that the offence with which I am charged took place at Boston, with the concurrence of the managers; with the approbation of friends, with whom I afterwards spent the evening—gentlemen of fortune and literary acquirements; and that I should not hear any dissatisfaction expressed until I arrived in this city? I passed the following morning at Boston tranquilly; and on my arrival in New York, murmurs of disapprobation were heard, which appeared to me like an overwhelming *avalanche* at the termination of a brilliant harvest.

"At an immoderate expense, and with all that additional cost which falls to the lot of a stranger, I repaired to Boston to fulfil my engagements. Had I been acquainted with the customs of the country, I should have made different arrangements; but my advisers

never intimated to me that theatres were only visited in certain months of the year; that when curiosity had subsided, dramatic talent was not in estimation. I never could or would believe that the arts in this country were only encouraged periodically, or that there could be any season in which Shakspeare was diminished in value; but as I am now initiated in these mysteries, I shall hereafter profit by my experience.

"Sir, I live by my professional exertions. Innumerable family claims are satisfied by each month's disbursements; I cannot afford to give those talents away. I had performed two of my principal characters without hopes of remuneration in that town, where my efforts had, two months before, contributed largely to augment the public charities. I repeat, I had acted two characters to the very extent of my abilities without profit. On looking through the curtain, at seven o'clock, on the night I was to represent *Richard the Third*, (that character which has been the foundation of my fame and fortune,) I counted twenty persons in front of the theatre. I then decided, hastily if you please, that it was better to husband my resources for a more favourable season, and, in this decision, no disrespect was contemplated to the audience, slender as it was. The managers apparently concurred with me, deplored the unfortunate state of the times, and we parted in perfect harmony and confidence.

"It was my intention to leave America on the close of my southern engagements. I now think it my duty to

return again to Boston, and in person vindicate my cause at the season when those who most patronise the theatre are assembled. The public have treated me with the greatest liberality, and I shall ever acknowledge its favours with pride and gratitude. At the latest hour I shall remember those friends by whom I have been encircled, and whose amity and confidence I am convinced I have not forfeited. But I may be permitted to say, that the present hostility is not the voice of the public; it is that spirit of detraction ever attendant on little minds—a spirit which watches for its prey, and seizes upon transient and accidental occurrences to defame and destroy. That respectable presses in this country should have been influenced by such feelings, and denounce with such acrimony and bitterness, is to me extraordinary. 'There is something in it more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.'

"I understand some gentlemen have asserted that I have acted to equally bad houses in England. I lament that they are driven to such extremities; or, rather, that they should compel me to declare that their assertions are untrue. The present existence of the first theatre in Europe is founded on the abilities which they affect to despise. The provincial Managers of England, Scotland, and Ireland, have thankfully rewarded my efforts by sums equal to what I receive from my friend Mr. Price, the worthy and efficient Manager of the theatre in this city. For the first three years of a career unprecedented in dramatic annals, I was in receipt

of double that sum in every theatre in which I acted, and, even allowing a trifling diminution in the space of seven years, what am I to think of a city in which I have been received with equal enthusiasm, and witness a total desertion in the space of three months? But the public say I was too precipitate,—that I should have performed that evening, and then closed my engagement. Granted. Our feelings frequently mar our better judgments, and from trifling causes lead to results which we subsequently regret. The error was venal, for who is exempt from error? But all unprejudiced people will, I trust, take into consideration the unprofitable labour of acting *Richard the Third* to a solitary few, who subsequently acknowledged themselves perfectly contented with the gentleman who represented the character.

"I am now convinced that the fine weather was my chief enemy, and shall again resume my station in the Boston Theatre before I return to England.

"I beg leave, Sir, to submit this 'round unvarnished tale' to the consideration and decision of the public; and I have too exalted an opinion of their justice and liberality not to anticipate a verdict in my favour.

"EDMUND KEAN."

MR. KEAN'S FAREWELL TO AMERICA.

[*From the New York National Advocate of June* 8.]

"SIR,—As I find it impossible for individual efforts to stem the torrent of opposition with which I have to contend, and as I likewise consider it inconsistent with my feelings and character to make additional apologies, I have resolved to return to my native country, and beg leave to offer to the public my thanks for that portion of favour bestowed on me, and respectfully bid them farewell.

"Had I been aware of the enormity of the offence which has excited so much indignation, I certainly should not have permitted my feelings to interfere with my interest.

"The 'very head and front of my offending' amounts to this: an actor, honoured, patronised by his native country, and enjoying a high rank in the drama, withheld his services under the impression that they were not duly appreciated; and so much do I fear the frailty of my nature, that it is not improbable, under the same circumstances, I might be tempted to act in the same manner. I therefore think it proper to leave the theatre open to such compeers, whose interests it may be to study the customs, and not offend them by my presence any longer.

"Before I left England, I was apprised how powerful an agent the Press was in a free country, and I was ad-

monished to be patient under the lashes that awaited me; and, at a great sacrifice of feeling, I have submitted to their unparalleled severity and injustice. I was too proud to complain, and suffered in silence; but I have no hesitation in saying, that the conduct I pursued was that which every man of reputation would pursue under the same circumstances, in that country where Shakspeare was born, and Garrick had acted.

"Again, I disclaim any intention of offending; and although every natural domestic tie, as well as the public love, await me on my own shores, it is with reluctance and regret I leave my friends in America.

"EDMUND KEAN."

NOTE E. (See p. 226.)

THE effects of the verdict, in Cox *v.* Kean, on the tragedian; his revival after his second visit to America; and finally, his total loss of memory, are given by W. Grattan in a very graphic manner. The paper from which we make the following extracts was published in the New Monthly Magazine.

"I called on him in London, soon after the business" [the trial] "had subsided, and when he was on the point of his exile to America. I never saw a man so changed; he had all the air of desperation about him. He looked bloated with rage and brandy; his nose was red, his cheeks blotched, his eyes blood-shot; I really pitied him. He had lodgings in Regent-street; but I believe very few of his former friends, of any respectability, now noticed him. The day I saw him he sat

down to the piano, notwithstanding the agitated state of his mind, and sang for me 'Lord Ullin's Daughter,' with a depth, and power, and sweetness, that quite electrified me. I had not heard him sing for many years; his improvement was almost incredible; his accompaniment was also far superior to his former style of playing. I could not repress a deep sentiment of sorrow at the wreck he presented of genius, fame, and wealth. At this period I believe he had not one hundred pounds left of the many thousands he had received. His mind seemed shattered; he was an outcast on the world. He left England a few days afterwards, and I never dreamt of seeing him again.

* * * * * * *

"Within two years of this time, Kean, to the surprise of every one, returned from America, having reaped a full harvest of dollars, much of which he had prudence enough to transmit to London before him. The furious outcry against him had subsided. The public longed for him once more; and he came back (to use his own not inexpressive phrase) 'as the representative of Shakspeare's heroes.'

"When I heard of the brilliant success which attended his reappearance, I immediately sent over the MS. of 'Ben Nazir, the Saracen.' I soon followed the MS., and found it literally in Kean's hands. He had read it with avidity; and, placing to any account that may be chosen, the enthusiastic terms in which he spoke of it to *me*, one fact proves the value which he really set on it. He chose it out of five or six, which were put

before him by Mr. Price, the manager, (one of them being Mr. Knowles's 'Alfred,') as that in which he would make his *regenerated* appearance in a new character before a London audience.

"His whole situation, appearance, and conduct at this critical period of his career were very remarkable and characteristic. He presented a mixture of subdued fierceness, unsatisfied triumph, and suppressed debauchery. He had, in a great measure, recovered his place before the public; but he had lost all the respectability of private life. He lived in the Hummums Hotel, Covent-garden: his wife occupied obscure lodgings in Westminster, and was, as well as his son, quite at variance with him."

"When I first called on him at the Hummums, one day early in 1827, he was sitting up in his bed, a buffalo-skin wrapped round him, a huge hairy cap, decked with many-coloured feathers, on his head, a scalping-knife in his belt, and a tomahawk in his hand. He was making up his face for a very savage look. A tumbler glass of white-wine negus stood at the bed-side; two shabby-looking heroes were close by, with similar potations in their reach; and a portrait painter was placed before an easel at the window, taking the likeness of the renowned *Alanienonideh*, the name in which the chieftain (most sincerely) rejoiced *."

"I was announced by a black boy in livery. I saw

"* Kean made use of visiting-cards at this time, with his own proper name engraved at one side, and this adopted one, with a miniature likeness of himself, 'in character,' on the other."

Kean's eye kindle, somewhat perhaps with pleasure, at my visit; but more so, I thought, from the good opportunity of exhibiting himself in his savage costume. He gave a ferocious roll of his eyes, and a flourish of his tomahawk; then threw off his cap and mantle, and cordially shook me by the hand, producing from under his pillow the part of 'Ben Nazir,' written out from the prompter's book.

"The painter quickly retired; the satellite visiters soon followed, having first emptied their tumblers, and paid some extravagant compliments to their patron.

"When I first entered the room, Kean told me he had the gout in his foot; but when the painter and the others retired, he acknowledged that he was confined to his bed by a very bad sore leg, for which he was daily attended by surgeon Carpue, who prescribed the strictest regimen, and abstinence from all strong liquors, which Kean was endeavouring to obey as well as he could. By nursing himself in this manner for two days together, he was enabled to play three times a week; but still, in the exertion of acting, suffering considerable fatigue and pain.

"Kean felt deeply the importance of this projected appearance in 'Ben Nazir. He knew that a crisis had arrived in his professional fate; the whole tide of public feeling was with him. He had regained his place at the head of the acted drama. To confirm him there, beyond competition or cavil, there was only wanting one vigorous display of power in a new part, and that part was now ready written to his hand.

"Nothing, in short, could exceed the ardour with which he undertook the study of 'Ben Nazir.' He carried it away with him on the provincial tour on which he set out after playing his dozen nights in London to enthusiastic audiences."

Mr. Grattan then proceeds to state with what anxiety he followed the accounts of Kean's progress through provinces.

"In due time Kean arrived in London, enthusiastic, and, as he said, *perfect* in his part. He repeatedly said that he hoped to reap as much fame from it as from Maturin's 'Bertram,' and that he reckoned on playing it a hundred nights. His portrait in the part was to be immediately engraved. A new wherry, which Kean was then getting built for his annual prize race on the Thames, was to be called the 'Ben Nazir.' The dress in which he was to appear was to be the most splendid possible; and a notion may be formed on that head, from the fact that Kean was to pay fifty guineas for it, over and above the allowance from the Theatre. I might cite many other proofs of his enthusiasm.

"In the mean time the rehearsals were going on admirably. Every one was already perfect in their parts, with *one* exception, but this one was, unfortunately, out of controul, and consequently beyond discovery. Kean attended but two rehearsals, and both of these with the written part in his hand. On one occasion he read his part with great energy and effect. It was every thing I could wish; no one had a shadow

of doubt as to the impression it would produce on an audience. Congratulations were poured on me on all sides, with premature profusion.

"Kean now claimed the privilege of absenting himself from the subsequent rehearsals, alleging his unwillingness to lose time from the close study he wished to give to the minutest details of his part. It was thought better to let Kean have everything his own way, in a matter into which he had so evidently put his heart and soul, and which was of infinitely more importance to him than to any one else. I was quite satisfied, for I saw him almost daily, and witnessed the unceasing industry with which he laboured at the part. He used regularly to order his carriage after breakfast, and set off for Kensington Gardens, where he studied a couple of hours. Frequently he sailed in his boat on the river, and there spouted away to the free benefit of the watermen and the Naiades. I often called on him at night, knowing that my presence would keep away others; and about ten or eleven o'clock he invariably went to bed, 'and went to bed sober.'

"The night at length arrived. Every thing was ready: I saw Kean in the morning; he expressed himself with the utmost confidence; strutted about his drawing-room in his lodgings, Duke-street, Adelphi, decked out in his magnificent dress; and declaimed with great vigour some of his favourite passages—*the book in his hand.* Notwithstanding all this I had serious doubts of the night's result. I was certain he would be *imperfect;* but I

reckoned fully on his giving the principal passages with ample effect; and I calculated on subsequent representations repairing any defects which might appear on the first.

"In this mood I took leave of Kean, resolved not to interfere with him further; and I prepared to go to the theatre, in a state of some anxiety certainly, but one more pleasurable than the contrary. Mr. Wallack had secured me a private box behind the dress circle, to which I repaired about half an hour before the play began. The house was crowded in all parts. A fair share of applause was given to some of the early passages; and the audience seemed well prepared for Kean's appearance, with which the third scene was to open.

"He did at length appear. The intention of the author, and the keeping of the character, required him to rush rapidly on the stage, giving utterance to a burst of joyous soliloquy. What was my astonishment to see him, as the scene opened, standing on the centre of the stage, his arms crossed, and his whole attitude one of thoughtful solemnity! His dress was splendid; and thunders of applause greeted him from all parts of the house. To display the one and give time for the other, were the objects for which he stood fixed for several minutes, and sacrificed the sense of the situation. He spoke; but what a speech! The one I wrote consisted of eight or nine lines; *his* was of two or three *sentences*, but not six consecutive words of the text. His look, his manner, his tone, were *to me* quite appalling; to any other observer they must have been incomprehen-

sible. He stood fixed, drawled out his incoherent words, and gave the notion of a man who had been half-hanged and then dragged through a horse-pond. My heart, I confess it, sank deep in my breast. I was utterly shocked. And as the business of the play went on, and as *he* stood by, with moveless muscle and glazed eye, throughout the scene which should have been one of violent, perhaps too violent, exertion, a cold shower of perspiration poured from my forehead, and I endured a revulsion of feeling which I cannot describe, and which I would not for worlds one eye had witnessed.

"I had all along felt that this scene would be the touchstone of the play. Kean went through it like a man in the last stage of exhaustion and decay. The act closed—a dead silence followed the fall of the curtain; and I felt, though I could not hear, the voiceless verdict of 'damnation.'

"When the curtain fell, Mr. Wallack, the stage manager, came forward and made an apology for Kean's imperfection in his part, and an appeal in behalf of the play. Neither excited much sympathy; the audience was quite disgusted. I now, for the first time during the night, went behind the scenes. On crossing the stage towards the green-room I met Kean, supported by his servant and another person, going in the direction of his dressing-room. When he saw me he hung down his head, and waved his hand, and uttered some expressions of deep sorrow, and even remorse. I bore my disappointment as well as I could; returned my thanks to the other actors for their exertions; renounced dramatic

writing for ever, and paid a short visit of leave-taking to Kean, who seemed, as he well might be, overwhelmed with sorrow, whether for my sake or his own I do not attempt to decide. The total loss of the power of study, (as it is technically called), thus so fatally betrayed, prevented his attempting any new part since that day, which formed a crisis in his professional career. I have never seen him since; and, I trust that I may be excused for having entered so far into detail on what is so very personal to myself, in this remarkable episode in the life of (with perhaps Talma's exception) the greatest actor of my times."

Note F. (p. 246.)

The following is the Newspaper account of Kean's funeral:—

RICHMOND.

"Mr. Charles Kean and his particular friends, Mr. Sheridan Knowles, and Mr. Forster, arrived about half-past one o'clock, and were received by Mr. Lee, who had been unceasing in his efforts to make every arrangement calculated to accommodate the visiters, and further the general comfort (as far as comfort could be administered under the melancholy circumstances of the occasion) of private and public friends and admirers.

"Mr. Carpue, Mr. Douchez, Mr. Smith (Mr. Kean's Medical advisers), Mr. Macready, Mr. Dunn, Mr. W. Farren, Mr. Harley, Mr. John Cooper, Mr. Braham,

Mr. Powell, and Mr. C. Holland, (the last mentioned being the fathers of the stage), Mr. Stanfield, A.R.A., Mr. Clint, A.R.A., Mr. Ducrow, (an old and excellent friend of Mr. Kean), Mr. J. R. Anderson, Mr. Daniel, R.A., &c. &c., arrived about two o'clock.

"The coffin lay at Mr. Piggott's jun., the undertaker, on Friday, and was visited by great crowds of the inhabitants; upwards of a thousand, it was calculated, passed through the rooms during the evening. At half-past ten o'clock the following morning Mr. Kean's house was opened to those who were anxious to signify their respect towards its departed master. The coffin was laid out in a room upon the ground-floor, and until two o'clock the inhabitants of Richmond—the best and the most respectable — continued to pass through, accompanied by the many individuals who had arrived from London. The doors were at length, with considerable difficulty, closed, for the purpose of preparing for the ceremony.

"During the period intervening between this hour and three o'clock, (the time appointed for the commencement of the procession) a number of carriages arrived, containing friends and admirers of the deceased. The strongest disposition was displayed on the part of the townspeople to evince respect for the memory of the man of genius who had honoured Richmond with his residence. More than twenty of the most respectable tradesmen volunteered to be sworn in as special constables; and, thanks to their exertions and those of the police, the utmost order was preserved. The shops in

the streets through which the procession passed were all closed, and the decent aspect of grief prevailed throughout the whole town.

THE PROCESSION.

Within a few minutes of three o'clock Mr. Piggott, junior, the undertaker, having announced that every arrangement was complete, the procession moved in the following order:—

Two Beadles.
Two Mutes.

A Page. PLUME. A Page.

The Undertaker.

Pall-Bearers.
Mr. Braham.
Mr. W. Farren.
Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Macready.
Mr. Harley.
Mr. Dunn.
Pall-Bearers.

Supported by Mr. Alex. Lee.

Chief Mourner, Mr. CHARLES KEAN.

Supported by Mr. S. Knowles.

MOURNERS.

Mr. Hughes.
Mr. Douchez.
Mr. Frank Phippen.
Mr. Forster.
Mr. Carpue.
Mr. J. Smith.

THEATRE-ROYAL DRURY-LANE FUND COMMITTEE.

Mr. Penley.	Mr. Fitzwilliam.	Mr. O. Smith.
Mr. J. Russell.	Mr. Bennett.	Mr. Bedford.
Mr. Webster.	Mr. J. Vining.	Mr. Younge.
Mr. Thompson.	Mr. Willmott.	Mr. C. Jones.

MEMBERS OF THE PROFESSION.

Mr. Warde.	Mr. Diddier.	Mr. Bartley.
Mr. Keeley.	Mr. Laporte.	Mr. Perkins.
Mr. Abbott.	Mr. Stansbury.	Mr. Strickland.
Mr. Wrench.	Mr. Elton.	Mr. Balls.
Mr. F. Vining.	Mr. Duruset.	Mr. J. Anderson
Mr. Blanchard.	Mr. F. Mathews.	Mr. Brindall.

&c. &c.

Members of the Theatre-Royal, Drury-Lane.
Members of the Theatre-Royal, Covent-Garden.
Members of the Theatre-Royal, Haymarket.
Members of the Theatre-Royal, English Opera.
Members of Sadler's Wells.
Members of the City Theatre.
Members of the Surrey Theatre.
Members of the Queen's Theatre.
Members of different Professions
Inhabitants of Richmond.

THE CHURCH.

The Church was crowded, and, amongst the assembled multitude, we observed many, very many, who felt most deeply the melancholy occasion which had called them together. Every part of the ceremony was conducted with becoming solemnity; and, great as was the crowd, the behaviour of all was most respectful and decorous. The body having been placed on tressels in the chancel, the Rev. Mr. Campbell proceeded to read, in a most impressive and emphatic manner, the lesson of the day. A *Requiem*, ably conducted by Mr. Hawes, was then sung. The *Requiem* consisted of the two psalms to Purcell's chaunt in G minor. After the lesson, Handel's anthem, "When the ear heard him,"

and the chorus, "He delivered the poor that cried," were beautifully executed. The body was then borne in melancholy procession to its last resting place. The pathetic funeral service—"Man that is born of woman," having been read, and ashes having been poured on ashes, and dust thrown on dust, the mourners returned to the still crowded church, where, immediately before the grace, or parting blessing, was delivered Handel's heart-moving composition—"His body is buried in peace, but his name shall live for evermore," was beautifully sung.

Mr. Hawes conducted all the musical part of the ceremony.

The following is a list of the characters which Kean represented, subsequently to his appearance at Drury Lane Theatre, in the year 1814.

Shylock, (*Merchant of Venice.*)
Richard the Third,
Hamlet,
Othello,
Iago,
Luke, (*Riches.*)
Macbeth,
Romeo,
Reuben Glenroy, (*Town and Country.*)
Richard the Second,
Egbert, (*Ina.*)

Penruddock,	(*Wheel of Fortune.*)
Zanga,	(*Revenge.*)
Abel Drugger,	(*The Alchymist.*)
Leon,	(*Rule a Wife and have a Wife.*)
Octavian,	(*Mountaineers.*)
Duke Aranza,	(*Honey-moon*)
Florez,	(*Merchant of Bruges.*)
Sir Giles Overreach,	(*A New Way to Pay Old Debts.*)
Sforza,	(*Duke of Milan.*)
Bertram,	
Kitely,	(*Every Man in his Humour.*)
Sir Edward Mortimer,	(*Iron Chest.*)
Bajazet,	(*Tamerlane.*)
Achmet,	(*Barbarossa.*)
Brutus,	
Virginius,	
Orestes,	(*Distressed Mother.*)
Eugene,	(*Switzerland.*)
Selim,	(*Bride of Abydos.*)
Omreah,	(*Caribb Chief.*)
Rolla,	(*Pizarro.*)
Duke of York,	
Malvesi,	(*Dwarf of Naples.*)
Young Norval,	(*Douglas.*)
Timon of Athens,	
Eustache de St. Pierre,	(*Surrender of Calais.*)
King John,	
Felix,	(*Wonder.*)
Sir Pertinax Mac Sycophant,	(*Man of the World.*)

Cardinal Wolsey,	(*Henry the Eighth.*)
De Montfort,	
Jaffier,	(*Venice Preserved.*)
Ben Nazir,	
Hotspur,	(*Henry the Fourth.*)
Hastings,	(*Jane Shore.*)
Stranger,	
Lear,	
Coriolanus,	
Oroonoko,	
Balthazar,	(*Jew of Malta.*)
Posthumus,	(*Cymbeline.*)
Paris,	(*The Roman Actor.*)
Alexander the Great,	
Musaniello,	
Tom Tug,	(*Waterman.*)
Admirable Crichton.	

THE END.

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